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IMPACT OF GORBACHEV'S POLITICS

ON SOVIET NAVY MISSIONS

by

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DECEMBER 1990

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Prepared for: Naval Postgraduate School  
Monterey, CA 93943-5100

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>		1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; UNLIMITED DISTRIBUTION	
2b DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE		4 PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) NPS-NS-91-001	
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL		6b OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable) NS	7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION
6c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS MONTEREY, CA 93943-5100		7b ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
8a NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL	8b OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable)	9 PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER O&MN, DIRECT FUNDING	
8c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) MONTEREY, CA 93943		10 SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO	PROJECT NO
		TASK NO	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO
11 TITLE (Include Security Classification) IMPACT OF GORBACHEV'S POLITICS ON SOVIET NAVY MISSIONS			
12 PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) MIKHAIL TSYPKIN			
13a TYPE OF REPORT FINAL REPORT	13b TIME COVERED FROM 10/1/89 TO 9/30/90	14 DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 12/21/90	15 PAGE COUNT 57
16 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION			
17 COSATI CODES		18 SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	USSR; MILITARY; NAVY; FOREIGN POLICY; NUCLEAR WEAPONS.	
19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) Priorities of Soviet Navy missions are changing. The role of power projection is likely to decline. The mission of nuclear strikes against enemy territory continues to have top priority. Strategic ASW may be somewhat deemphasized. SLOC interdiction faces an uncertain future, direct support of ground operations is becoming more important.			
20 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21 ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
22a NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL MIKHAIL TSYPKIN		22b TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (408) 646-2521	22c OFFICE SYMBOL NS/TK



# **IMPACT OF GORBACHEV'S POLITICS ON SOVIET NAVY MISSIONS.\***

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\* The author would like to express his gratitude to Capt. Robert Bathurst (USN, Ret.) and Capt. Norman Channell (USN, Ret.) for their aluable comments. They are naturally not responsible for any of the author's mistakes.





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## INTRODUCTION: THE METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS.

In the past, Western analysts of Soviet military affairs found the obsessive secretiveness of their study subject to be the main methodological obstacle in their research. In those pre-*glasnost'* days they did not appreciate, however, the methodological advantages gained from stability and orthodoxy of the Brezhnev era. Statements by major military figures as well as major publications by academics could be safely taken to reflect a political decision already made. To take a relatively simple analytical case from the recent past, in order to conclude that the Soviets were likely to attempt to develop a global power projection mission, it was sufficient to observe the publication in 1972 by the Academy of Sciences of a book advocating Soviet military support for wars of "national liberation," a statement in 1974 by Minister of Defense Marshal Grechko that the USSR was ready to resist "imperialist aggression in whatever distant region of our planet it may appear," and the pronouncement in 1976 by Soviet Navy C-in-C Admiral Gorshkov about the unique ability of navies to achieve political results without actually resorting to war.<sup>1</sup> The crescendo of Soviet military involvement in the Third World from Angola to Ethiopia to Afghanistan is neatly predictable on the basis of such harmonious pronouncements.

This is in clear contrast to today's Soviet scene. For example, in 1988 the top Soviet military officers denied the possibility of unilateral Soviet troop cuts--until Gorbachev announced a 500,000 unilateral cut in December 1988.<sup>2</sup> Or take another case: on September 25, 1989, the Soviets promised to the U.S. to pull down their large phased-array radar near Krasnoyarsk; on October 5, 1989, the Deputy Chief of General Staff Col. Gen. Bronislav. Omelichev stated that the radar was legitimate; and then on October 24,

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<sup>1</sup>See Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, *The Armed Forces of the USSR* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1984), 3rd ed., pp. 58-60.

<sup>2</sup>See, for instance, MSU S. Akhromeev, "Chto kroyetsya za bryussel'skim zayavleniem NATO," *Krasnaya zvezda*, March 20, 1988, and "Vystuplenie M.S. Gorbacheva na ...sessii ...OON," *Vestnik MID*, no. 24, December 31, 1988.

1989, the Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze openly recognized the radar to be a violation of the ABM Treaty.<sup>3</sup> Today the Soviet statements on national security issues are much less cryptic than in the previous era, but predicting the policy outcome on the basis of declarations from responsible institutional actors has become equally more difficult.

What is the matter? In Stephen Meyer's apt phrase, "Gorbachev has brought policy initiation out into the open; under his predecessors public doctrinal discussions reflected decisions already taken."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, this policy initiation and formation process is becoming increasingly complicated as the pace of change in the Soviet Union is accelerating. The Soviet political institutions are changing; new social forces are entering the political area; the politicization of the military is moving by leaps and bounds, etc. Statements by various Soviet officials (military and civilian) related to naval matters are frequently outdated before they are published. Whatever the plans made today by politicians and naval officers, the rapidly deteriorating economy might very well cancel, delay and/or significantly distort them.

The current political and ideological confusion is well symbolized by the case of the *Tbilisi*, the first Soviet "real" aircraft carrier. The first ship of that class, it was initially called *Leonid Brezhnev*, apparently with the idea that subsequent ships will be named after other leading personalities of that generation of Soviet leaders (Suslov? Andropov? Chernenko?) When revelations under Gorbachev had made naming ships after the late General Secretary and his henchmen clearly impossible, the navy opted for what then seemed to be a safe and tested approach: to call the new ships after the capital cities of Union Republics, beginning with Tbilisi, the capital city of Georgia. But what message is conveyed by this name now: the massacre of anti-communist and anti-Russian demonstrators in Tbilisi by the Soviet military? the virulent Georgian nationalist movement

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<sup>3</sup>"Sovmestnoe zayavlenie ministrov," *Pravda*, September 25, 1989; Yu. Kornilov "Snyat' ozabochnost'," *Krasnaya zvezda* October 5, 1989; E. A. Shevardnadze, "Vneshnyaya politika i perestroyka," *Izvestiya*, October 24, 1989.

<sup>4</sup>Stephen M. Meyer, "The Sources And Prospects Of Gorbachev's New Political Thinking On Security," *International Security*, Fall 1988, vo. 13, no. 2, p. 130.

demanding secession from the Soviet Union? the increasing draft resistance on the part of the Georgian youth? And what should the two other planned ships of this class be called: Vilnius? Yerevan? Kishinev?

Given this state of confusion, even an analysis of a broad range of political and military factors may easily result in a forecast of more than one scenario of Soviet naval developments.

## **THE POLITICAL FACTORS BEHIND BREZHNEV'S NAVAL BUILDUP.**

In the Soviet approach to defense matters, the fundamental reasons for building a military force and preparing it for use are given by the socio-political aspect of their military doctrine, traditionally an exclusive domain of civilian party politicians. Today, the socio-political aspect of the Soviet military doctrine is in as much disarray as the communist party itself. It has lost the cohesion it has had for the last seventy years--a cohesion increasingly achieved at the cost, one should add, of ignoring the political and economic realities of the modern world. Several features of the socio-political aspect of the Soviet military doctrine had a major impact on the Soviet Navy.

The whole world was viewed as an arena for pervasive "class struggle" between the "capitalism," led by the United States, and the "socialism," led by the Soviet Union. No developments could overshadow this basic conflict until the final and inevitable triumph of socialism over capitalism. In this conflict, socialism represented the historical good, while capitalism--the historical evil. The struggle between the two acquired the characteristics of a zero-sum game, where the common good of mankind could be achieved only by socialism's advances against capitalism.

All of the above had direct implications for the Soviet Navy. The main enemy was easy to pinpoint: the most powerful free-market democracy with the largest navy, i.e., the



United States whose unremitting hostility towards the USSR was assumed automatically. The result was a navy fashioned for a war against the United States. Since the conflict had a class character, the USSR had to build a navy for a conflict not only with the U.S., but also with the latter's "class allies:" NATO countries, capitalist neutral countries of Western Europe such as Sweden, Japan and even China which by the late 1970s was viewed by Soviet ideologists as an ally of "imperialism." Indeed, Mr. Gorbachev criticized Soviet military policy of his predecessors as seeking to match the combined military power of "any possible coalition" that is, of the United States, Western Europe, Japan and China.<sup>5</sup> Such an approach to force planning was nothing less than a search for global military dominance, and had to have a serious impact on the development of the Soviet Navy.

The international class struggle was considered to be so pervasive as to be truly global: no nation, however small and/or underdeveloped could be left out of it. Therefore, the Soviet Navy had to acquire an accordingly global reach. Since the triumph of socialism had been predetermined, it was assumed that the Soviet Union would be gradually getting stronger relative to the United States: therefore, it was assumed that the Soviet Union could afford to build up a balanced blue water navy. Even though the Soviet leaders began to say in the mid-1970's that there would be no winners in a nuclear war, no revision was made in the deterministic vision of the inevitable triumph of socialism, because such a revision would have meant an acknowledgement of a huge exception to the theories of Marx and Lenin. Consequently, the Soviet Navy, as the Soviet military in general, was built to fight and win in a nuclear war, as acknowledged by the First Deputy Chief of the International Department of the Central Committee of CPSU Vadim Zagladin who stated that until now the Soviet Union made its military plans on the basis "of a possibility of victory in a nuclear war."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Cited in "Doklad E. A. Shevardnadze," *Vestnik Ministerstva inostrannykh del SSSR*, 1988, no. 15, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup>"Vneshnyaya politika i perestrouka," *Izvestiya*, June 27, 1988.

A very important aspect of Soviet politics underlying their military doctrine was Great Russian nationalism. In the realms of foreign and military policies, the Russian nationalist sentiment has been traditionally manifested through a preoccupation with 'Russian Empire' status as a great power. Today when many of the historic patterns of Russian ideology and political culture are rapidly revived, one should remember about the traditional link between the ideology of Great Russian nationalism and the navy.

In the end of the XIX--early XX centuries, Great Russian nationalism was an important factor in the expansion of the Russian empire. (Aggressive and expansionist nationalisms were quite typical for the European powers of that period.) This had a direct impact on Russia's naval policies. At the turn of the century, for example, a major naval buildup program was stimulated by Russia's expansion in the Far East.<sup>7</sup> After that program had miserably failed in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, the debates on a new naval program brought into focus the relationship between the pursuit of a great power status for the Russian Empire and the requirement for a blue water navy. The Army proposed coastal defense as the primary mission for the navy because Russia was primarily a land power. The Naval Minister Adm. I. Dikov responded that Russia needed a strong navy "as a great power," so that it could be dispatched "where the interests of the state need it." The Foreign Minister A. Izvol'skiy agreed: "This navy should...not be bound by a particular mission of defending this or that sea or bay, it should operate where politics requires it."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, despite Russia's serious economic problems and its character as nearly exclusively a landpower, the construction of a balanced navy capable of projecting power far from Russian shores was undertaken; however, it had to be abandoned in the course of World War I in the interest of Russia's survival.

A similar language was used nearly seventy years later by Admiral Gorshkov in his *Sea Power of the State* to promote an ocean-going Soviet Navy as a powerful instrument of

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<sup>7</sup>L. G. Beskrovnyy, *Armiya i flota Rossii v nachale XX v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), p. 161.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 193, 194.

the Kremlin's great power policies.<sup>9</sup> The Brezhnev era, during which a spectacular naval buildup occurred, was characterized by an emphasis on the newly achieved status of the Soviet Union as a military superpower, and by what Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze has termed an "imperial philosophy" which reigned in the Kremlin. Among other things, it ignored the interests of the subjugated ethnic periphery of the Soviet Union. The ethnically Georgian foreign minister did not need to point to the self-evident fact that the empire was Russian. Indeed, when offered the job of Foreign Minister in 1985, Shevardnadze doubted the viability of his candidacy because he was not an ethnic Russian.<sup>10</sup> (This, of course, does not mean that the Russian people were true beneficiaries of the imperial expansion and military buildup.)

Last, but not least, the decades of emphasis on international conflict and rigid command political-economic system at home have resulted in a militarization of the Soviet political culture as a whole as well as in a creation of a huge military-industrial complex (as many Soviets now refer to it) which consumes more than 1/3 of all industrial labor and more than one half of all research and development effort in the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> This military-industrial complex came into its own during Brezhnev's era, characterized by the General Secretary's reluctance to make hard choices and confront powerful bureaucratic interests. Today there is more than enough documentation to show how unchecked bureaucracies engaged in various gigantic self-serving projects; the military and defense industry in general, protected by extraordinary security and militarism of the political culture, and the navy and shipbuilding and related industries in particular, created a powerful lobby for the naval buildup.

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<sup>9</sup>Adm. S. Gorshkov, *Morskaya noshch' gosudarstva* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1979), pp. 365-371.

<sup>10</sup>Eduard Shevardnadze, "Ubezhat' pravdy," *Ogonyok*, 1990, no. 11, reproduced in *USSR Today. Soviet Media News and Features Digest*, March 24, 1990, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>S. Blagovolin, "Geopoliticheskie aspekty oboronitel'noy dostatochnosti," *Kommunist*, 1990, no. 4, reproduced in *USSR Today. Soviet Media News and Features Digest*, March 20, 1990, pp. 29, 35, 36.



Thus, the Soviet naval programs of the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's were determined by a political culture which put Marxist-Leninist ideology into a frame of Russian great power interests, as well as by the activities of a conglomerate of institutional interests. All these three factors contributed to the naval expansion into the Third World. The attempt to build a balanced blue-water navy in general was also due to these three factors. The selecting of repulsion of an aerospace attack as a top priority navy mission (as promoted by a recent Soviet book which made a considerable impression in the U.S.)<sup>12</sup> is supported by the Marxist-Leninist views of war as the last great battle of classes. It shows the militarization of political culture and decision-making, as well as the triumph of the self-interest of the military-industrial complex (it is a very expensive mission). In contrast, the use of SSBNs for nuclear deterrence or the defense of the coastal zones is much less specific for any set of ideological and political factors.

## **DISINTEGRATION OF COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE. EMERGENCE OF NEW IDEOLOGIES AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES.**

From Stalin to Brezhnev, the Soviet leadership confidently drew the line of ideological and political battle. Political systems that had communist party monopoly on power, rigid ideological controls and centralized command economies were considered socialist. Opposed to them were capitalist systems with their political and ideological pluralism, and free market economies. Friends and enemies were identified, and that imparted a crude cohesion to the Kremlin's policies. In contrast, Gorbachev's regime has

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<sup>12</sup>Vyunenko N.P. et al., *Voenno-morskoy flot: rol', perspektivy razvitiya, ispol'zovanie* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1988), pp. 219-235; for U.S. reaction, see *The U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1989, pp. 136-148.



clearly lost its ideological bearings. His chief ideological advisor Aleksandr Yakovlev defines socialism in a way not really different from Western social-democracy, and implies that this is the rather distant ideal for the Soviets to pursue.<sup>13</sup> Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze mocks the traditional class approach to foreign policy:

The critics of *perestroika* accuse us of betraying the class principles, while the "class enemy" is providing us with [disposable] syringes, equipment for treating burns, artificial limbs, wheel chairs, sends us physicians and bone marrow.<sup>14</sup>

He has further said that "a state which is founded on the narcotic of an 'enemy image' has no right to exist."<sup>15</sup>

It would have been a simplification to say that such ideas constitute today's "party line," because they came under severe and open attack during several recent CPSU Central Committee plenary meetings and the XXVIII Party Congress. The traditional communist ideology is undergoing a transformation from the overwhelming doctrine which determined policies in all major spheres of action to an ideology actively espoused only by a dwindling number of high-ranking officials of the communist party, the military and the KGB. Although on the way to extinction in its pure form, this ideology, by virtue of its domination of Russian-Soviet intellectual life for more than seventy years, is likely to leave a significant imprint on the now emerging political culture.<sup>16</sup>

This decline of ideology has been paralleled by a similar transformation of the CPSU's power structure. Since the establishment of the office of the President of the USSR in March 1990, and of the Presidential Council, the Politburo's decision-making

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<sup>13</sup>Aleksandr Yakovlev, "Sotsializm: ot mechty k real'nosti," *Kommunist*, 1990, no. 4, reproduced in *USSR Today. Soviet Media News and Features Digest*, March 20, 1990, especially see p. 25.

<sup>14</sup>Eduard Shevardnadze, "Konsolidatsiya KPSS v usloviyakh mnogopartiynosti," *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 18, 1990.

<sup>15</sup>Leonid Pleshakov, "Ubezhdai' prvdoy," *Ogonyok*, 1990, # 11, reproduced in *USSR Today. Soviet Media News and Features Digest*, March 24, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>For an analysis of such an imprint, see Aleksandr Tsipko, "Khoroshi li nashi printsipy," *Novyy Mir*, 1990, no. 7, pp. 173-204.

powers began to be progressively narrowed down to party affairs only.<sup>17</sup> This process has found its logical conclusion at the XXVIII Party Congress, which decided, under Gorbachev's pressure, to change rather drastically the character of the Politburo: its size (twenty four people) and its composition (fifteen members represent *ex officio* the communist parties of Union Republics, which are demoralized and in retreat in the face of growing nationalist movements) will ensure a very substantial reduction of this body's role in the national policymaking. The Secretariat of the Central Committee has retained its member in charge of the defense industrial issues, Oleg Baklanov, but there is clearly no "senior secretary" (i.e., a secretary who is also a member of the Politburo) in charge of military issues as a whole. It was announced that in the course of the latest reorganization of the Central Committee in October 1990, that body lost all its mechanisms for controlling the military and the KGB. The national security decision-making has been shifted into the President's office, that of the Presidential Council and the Defense Council, now apparently attached to the President. More details have to emerge to allow a definitive statement on this subject.<sup>18</sup>

It is premature to say that the formulation of defense policies has become open to more than a group of top political and military leaders. This will not be so until the popular representative character of the Supreme Soviet is firmly established, its independence of the executive power of the President proven, and the umbilical cord between the Committee on Defense and State Security and the military-industrial complex cut.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless the fake public consensus on matters of national security which prevailed during the last 70 years, has been broken. Civilian analysts from the USSR Academy of Sciences Research

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<sup>17</sup>Alexander Rahr "From Politburo to Presidential Council," *Report on the USSR*, June 1, 1990, pp. 1-5.

<sup>18</sup>"Rech' M. Gorbachevaperedoitserami," reproduced in *USSR Today. Soviet Media News and Features Digest*, August 17, 1990, p. 15; FE/RL, *Daily Report*, no. 193, October 10, 1990.

<sup>19</sup>See Mikhail Tsyarkin, "The Committee for Defense and State Security of the USSR Supreme Soviet," *Report on the USSR*, vol. 2, no. 19, pp. 8-11.

Institutes have been criticizing practically all aspects of Soviet military posture, much to the angry shock of many Soviet generals.<sup>20</sup>

While it is difficult to measure the real influence of such civilian analysts, it is quite obvious that beginning with the acceptance of zero-option for the INF Treaty, the military had on one occasion after another to abandon their highly publicized positions on security matters, while the political leaders adopted arms reductions policies advocated by civilians. To make matters worse for the politically conservative military establishment, some of these policies--decoupling of INF talks from START and of talks on strategic offensive systems from talks on "space" systems--were advocated by Andrei Sakharov, who was loathed by many in the military.

The consensus on military matters has been shattered even at the top of the national security decision-making machinery, as demonstrated by the open feud between the Foreign Minister, member of the Presidential Council and (until the XXVIII Party Congress) Politburo member Eduard Shevardnadze and the military. One line of conflict has involved no less an issue than the LPAR near Krasnoyarsk. Within days after Shevardnadze had pledged to destroy the radar and thus implicitly acknowledged that it was a violation of the ABM Treaty, the Ministry of Defense daily newspaper had printed an article signed by the First Deputy Chief of the General Staff Gen. Bronislav Omelichev flatly denying any violation.<sup>21</sup> Even after Shevardnadze publicly described the radar as a violation,<sup>22</sup> high-ranking Soviet military officers avoid directly endorsing this point of view.<sup>23</sup> For instance, when Marshal Sergei Akhromeev was asked about the subject during his testimony in the U.S. Senate in May 1990, he replied: "Our Foreign Minister,

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<sup>20</sup>The most prominent example of this new phenomena are the duels between Georgiy Arbatov and Aleksei Arbatov, on the one hand, and various high-ranking military officers. See, for instance, Alexei Arbatov, "How Much Defence Is Sufficient?" *International Affairs*, April 1989, pp. 31-44, and Major-General Yu. Lyubimov, "O dostatochnosti oborony i nedostatke kompetentosti," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, 1989, no. 16, pp. 21-26.

<sup>21</sup>Col. General B. Omelichev, "Snyat' ozabochennost," *Krasnaya zvezda*, October 5, 1989.

<sup>22</sup>E. A. Shevardnadze, "Vneshnyaya politika i perestroika," *Izvestiya*, October 24, 1989.

<sup>23</sup>Hearing of the Subcommittee on Projection Forces, U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, May 8, 1980, B-2-7, p. 2.



who is a member of our government, said that deployment of that radar ... was a violation of the ABM Treaty, and we are now dismantling it." This is hardly a ringing endorsement!

As this case was of such a great importance for Soviet foreign policy, the military were in effect challenging not only Shevardnadze, but, by implication, Mikhail Gorbachev himself. Their willingness to challenge him was amply demonstrated at the founding Congress of the Russian Communist Party and several weeks later at the XXVIII Party Congress, where several military officers attacked various aspects of Gorbachev's security policies.

Another line of conflict has resulted from the explanations about the massacre of demonstrators in Tbilisi, Georgia, in April 1989. Shevardnadze has been publicly accused by several high-ranking military officers of lying for his criticism of the military role in the tragedy.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, this is a turbulent atmosphere for decision-making on major military matters.

The conservative challenges to "new thinking" have probably gone beyond the verbal stage and into policymaking area. In his rebuttal to critics at the XXVIII Party Congress Gorbachev hinted at this:

Those who hold important government jobs, who are directly involved with our international activities, even if they disagree with the policies of the country's leadership, must implement the state-approved policies even against their personal opinion. It is impermissible that the President and the government have one [policy] line, and somebody else has a different one and is implementing it. ... Everybody in government service should be loyal to the government. And if they are decent people and disagree with the government policies, let them resign.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Lt. General A. F. Katusev, "Proshu opublikovat'," *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, March 25, 1990; Col. Gen. I. Rodionov, "Lish' polnaya pravda mozhnet ubedit'," *Literaturnaya Rossiya* April 20, 1990.

<sup>25</sup>"Vystuplenie M. S. Gorbacheva," *Pravda*, July 11, 1990.

The turbulence is further increased by the explosion of nationalism. Neither the Soviet planners, nor the Western observers can be absolutely certain about the future borders and composition of the Soviet Union. The Baltic republics are striving to leave it altogether; others, like the Ukraine, have proclaimed the right (so far theoretical) to have their own armed forces, and have demanded the withdrawal of their conscripts from the Soviet Armed Forces; the Russian Federation under Boris Yeltsin, while recognizing the USSR's primacy in matters of defense, is planning to establish a position of RSFSR Minister of Defense to look after the armed forces' activities in the Russian republic. Greater or complete independence for the Baltic republics and the Ukraine, Moldavia and Georgia will certainly reduce the dominant status of the Russian navy in the Baltic and Black seas. Will Russia, truncated in Europe to its ethnically Russian territories, continue to be Euro-centric; or will it direct its major interests to the Far East and the Pacific?

There are indications of increased interest in the Far East and Pacific across the board of the emerging Russian nationalist consciousness. Boris Yeltsin made a point of visiting the Far East and emphasizing its special importance for Russia.<sup>26</sup> At the other extreme, in an article published by *Morskoy sbornik*, one of the most outspoken conservative Russian nationalists and militarists, Karem Rash, advocated a greater effort to establish Russian military, political and economic influence on the Pacific shores.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, however, some Soviet "military theoreticians" now tend to view the USSR not as a superpower but as "a European country with Asian interests."<sup>28</sup>

While the attention of Western observers is primarily focused on explosions of minority nationalisms, the most important geopolitical phenomenon today is the transformation of the Russian nation's imperial identity. It is difficult to distinguish between the Russian national interest and the needs of the Russian-dominated multi-ethnic

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<sup>26</sup>Stanislav Glukhov, "Chelovek dolzhen rabotat' spokojno," *Moskovskie novosti*, September 2, 1990.

<sup>27</sup>Karem Rash, "Okeanicheskoe myshlenie," *Morskoy sbornik*, 1989, no. 7, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup>Viktor Altaev, "Vooruzhennye Sily SSSR: v kontse puti," *Vek XX i mir*, no. 6, 1990, p. 29.

empire. It will be probably easier to define the national interests of Russia in a Russian nation-state (that is, a country, on the territory of today's RSFSR, where the ethnic Russians are in an overwhelming majority). But since such a nation-state might emerge only as a result of the loss of the Soviet/Russian empire, this may also leave the national psyche traumatized, and thus subject to unpredictable and violent metamorphoses. Will the emancipation of the Russian nation from the imperial burden result in it turning its energies inward, or would it be a prelude to a new effort at expansion?

All these conflicts and uncertainties could not have endowed the Soviet defense policy-making with anything like its past consistency. Indeed, some Soviet observers are saying bluntly that their country's leadership is having a hard time determining the Soviet Union's national interests.<sup>29</sup> This exceptionally fluid political context for the Kremlin's national security decision-making should be kept in mind when undertaking an analysis of the impact of Gorbachev's policies on current and future missions of the Soviet Navy.

## **SOVIET MILITARY THINKING AND GORBACHEV'S "NEW THINKING."**

The Soviet military thinking is characterized by certain peculiarities which make an assimilation of Gorbachev's "new thinking" a far from smooth process. The intellectual horizons of several generations of Soviet military officers (since Stalin's purges destroyed the last of Tsarist military intellectuals and the more daring military thinkers of Soviet formation) have been artificially limited to the subject of warfighting. While the Soviet higher education in general has not fostered the spirit of free inquiry, the military education has narrowly focused on warfighting skills. Even more importantly, the study of

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<sup>29</sup>A. Kortunov, A. Izyumov, "kto ponimat' pod gosudarstvennymi interesami vo vnezhney politike?" *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 11, 1990.



warfighting has been heavily concentrated on operational-tactical aspects; military strategy (the level at which the major issues such as winnability of nuclear war are most appropriately raised) has been studied only by the small minority of students admitted to the Voroshilov General Staff Academy.<sup>30</sup>

The education of Soviet officers leaves no room for free debate, makes the officers extremely uncomfortable with unorthodox ideas, fosters an intellectual climate in which unpleasant realities are frequently avoided by simply denying them. The General Staff theoretical journal *Voennaya mysl'* notes that Soviet officers do not know how to debate, how to deal with dissenting views. That is not surprising in view of the character of their education:

In military history courses as they are taught in the military institutions of higher education, not one lecture hour is devoted to learning the methods of scholarly debate. As a result, some comrades in the course of discussions frequently attempt to present their emotions, proposals, personal impressions and even inventions as historical facts.<sup>31</sup>

The majority of top Soviet military officers have graduated from the General Staff Academy, but we should take note of the fact that these officers for the first time dealt with the subject of strategy when they were already close to the apex of their careers (the students' ranks at the General Staff Academy range from lieutenant colonel to major general, and respective navy ranks).<sup>32</sup> Common sense suggests that younger individuals are generally more open to new ideas than the older ones. There is no statistical data proving conclusively that critical evaluation of new study materials is substantially lower among successful middle and high-ranking officers in their late thirties and forties than

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<sup>30</sup>N. Sautin, "Polkovodtsami ne rozhdayutsya," *Izvestiya*, November 1, 1986.

<sup>31</sup>Major General A. G. Khor'kov, "Istoricheskiy opyt v razvitii voennoy nauki," *Voennaya mysl'*, 1990, no. 6, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup>Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, *The Armed Forces of the USSR*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), p. 385.



among junior officers in their late twenties. The tendency of senior officers, however, to be more skeptical about Gorbachev's reforms than the junior officers, indicates the former group is less receptive to new ideas in general and the "new thinking" in particular, than the latter one.

Of all the social/professional groups in the Soviet society, the military officers have been perhaps the most closely watched from the point of view of their political loyalty, primitively interpreted as a blind obedience to the current party line. They have been well trained never to question the tenets of the official doctrine, which embraced, as mentioned earlier, the concept "of a possibility of victory in a nuclear war."<sup>33</sup>

This bespeaks of a Marxist double-think. After all, the drive for conventional warfighting capability and escalation dominance, which the Soviets pursued at such a great cost since the 1960s, is a manifestation of their ardent desire to avoid a nuclear war presumably because of its catastrophic consequences. But drawing the next logical conclusion, namely that a confrontation which can easily escalate into self-destruction no longer makes any political or military sense, turned out to be impossible for political reasons. A straightforward recognition that a fact of technological development had cancelled the inevitability of the Marxist vision of history would have been subversive to the existing Soviet political structure based precisely on this historical determinism.

The Soviet military has chosen history as a solution to this double-think dilemma. Military history has become a proxy for dealing with tomorrow's military art. Military history has been primarily attractive because it is both glorious and safe. It is glorious because its lessons have been for the most part derived from the victorious experiences of World War II. Use of military history has been safe because it involves events and concepts that had already received an official political evaluation, be it the battles against the Germans and the Japanese, or the experiences of "local wars" from the 1950s to the 1980s.

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<sup>33</sup>"Vneshnyaya politika i perestroyka," *Izvestiya*, June 27, 1988.

The result has been a peculiar approach, matching (and quite creatively!) a visionary treatment of emerging military technologies with a perception of war derived from the experience of the 1940s: a very costly and destructive affair, enhanced to a truly global level by the new technological capabilities, resulting in the victor's transplanting his political system onto the vanquished.<sup>34</sup> Gorbachev recently confirmed this saying that the Soviet "concept of security was to a considerable degree rooted in the consequences and lessons of ... the war against Germany."<sup>35</sup> It is likely that the Chernobyl nuclear disaster made the Soviet political leadership and military high command, both previously numbed by the rhetoric of their own anti-nuclear peace offensives to its message, suddenly wake up to its meaning.<sup>36</sup> Now the Soviet military must reconcile the conflict between the realities of modern technology and their military strategy.

An additional difficulty is presented by the fact that the "new thinking" is an idea generated and actively promoted by civilian scholars. The Soviet military have no experience of working with civilian analysts on issues of military doctrine. To be fair, one should say that the Soviet civilian analysts' enthusiasm for giving advice to the military is substantially greater than their actual experience in military affairs. Most of them are newcomers to this field. The Soviet Union lacks a core of civilian analysts of military affairs like the ones in the U.S.--individuals with long-time experience of direct involvement with the military by virtue of research contracts, jobs in the Pentagon, previous military service, etc. The Soviet military is inclined to mistrust these newcomers and their opinions. The collaboration between the two groups is still practically non-existent, one of the rare, albeit prominent exceptions being a paper co-authored by the "new

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<sup>34</sup>See, for instance, Ghulam Dastagir Wardak, comp., *The Voroshilov Lectures*, vol. I, *Issues of Soviet Military Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1989), pp. 69-75; Marshal of the Soviet Union N. Ogarkov, *Istoriya uchit bditel'nosti* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1985), p. 77; Yu. Ya. Kirshin et al., *Politicheskoe soderzhanie sovremennykh voyn* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987), p. 256.

<sup>35</sup>"Rech' M. Gorbacheva pered ofitserami," p. 12.

<sup>36</sup>Gorbachev has spoken quite bluntly about the impact of Chernobyl on Soviet national security policy; see "Vystuplenie M. S. Gorbacheva," *Pravda*, July 11, 1990.

thinker" Andrei Kokoshin and First Deputy Chief of General Staff Army Gen. Vladimir Lobov.<sup>37</sup>

The second contradiction that the Soviet military now has to confront is the relationship between military capabilities and the nation's economy. For decades, the party line was that economic strength was a key ingredient in the global "correlation of forces"; the Soviet military repeated *ad nauseam* that it was the spectacular growth of the Soviet socialist economy that permitted the no less spectacular growth of the Soviet military capabilities and achievement of strategic parity with the United States.<sup>38</sup> It turns out that neither is true. The defense policy-making in effect ignored economic realities: military requirements had an absolute priority over the economic resources; as the Deputy Chairman of the Defense Council Lev Zaykov testified at the 28th CPSU Congress in July 1990, until 1985 the Defense Council first approved military programs, and only then means for full financing were found.<sup>39</sup> It has also turned out that the Soviet economic growth has been much less than claimed. Without reliable economic statistics nobody now knows what the real Soviet GNP is, and what it was at different moments in Soviet history when this or that decision on defense spending was made. Foreign Minister Shevardnadze has even challenged the legitimacy of the concept of U. S. -Soviet military parity:

The time has come to recognize that there can be no parity between two nations if it is not backed up by comparable volumes of GNP and comparable levels of scientific and technological development.<sup>40</sup>

The military is under pressure to learn how to adjust its requirements to unpleasant economic realities.

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<sup>37</sup>A. A. Kokoshin, V. N. Lobov. "Predvidenie," *Znamya*, 1990, no. 2, pp. 170-182.

<sup>38</sup>Ogarkov, *Istoriya uchit bditel'nosti*, p. 78.

<sup>39</sup>See the speech by Lev Zaykov at the 28th CPSU Congress, *Pravda*, July 4, 1990.

<sup>40</sup>Shevardnadze, "Konsolidatsiy: KPSS v usloviyakh mnogopartiynosti."



The learning process is complicated by the unique position of the military in Soviet society. Given the weak legitimacy of the political system and the growth of centrifugal nationalist forces, the armed forces are the main pillar of Soviet internal stability, the main power that keeps the empire together. This makes Gorbachev wary of pressuring the military too far too fast to adjust to the "new thinking."

Finally, in adapting to the "new thinking," the Soviet military share a problem with any military establishment of a nuclear power. If any major conflict can become nuclear, and if unwinnability of a nuclear war is openly recognized in the doctrine, how are the armed forces to be structured, armed and motivated? The Soviets have not found an answer to this question as yet.

#### THREAT ASSESSMENT: SOVIET VIEWS.

The Soviet Navy needs a threat even more than the U.S. Navy. The latter's prominent share in the allocation of resources is protected by the tradition and the consensus (correct or not) among the public that American well-being depends on her Navy's ability to protect freedom of navigation worldwide. The Russian/Soviet naval tradition is full of ups and downs. There were periods in this century when Russia/USSR managed to survive practically without a navy. The ground forces have been crucial for survival of the Russian/Soviet empire against external and internal threat, while the navy has never played such a major role. Given the enormous expense of maintaining a modern navy, and the disastrous performance of the Soviet economy, the Soviet Navy (VMF--*Voенно-Morskoy Flot*) needs an identifiable enemy to justify its existence as more than a coastal defense force.

It is not surprising that the VMF command has continued to point to the U.S. Navy as the main threat. This is true both for the threat assessments made in the earlier period of

Gorbachev's rule and those being made public now.<sup>41</sup> If the current political thaw between the two superpowers and the disintegration of communist system and ideology within the USSR continue, a threat assessment more sophisticated than the still prevalent reference to the evils of American imperialism will have to be found. There are initial indications that the new threat assessment is likely to be driven by the estimates of destructive potential possessed by other powers mixed with a more realistic evaluation of their intentions, freed from Marxist-Leninist determinism. For example, participants in a recent civilian-military conference have come up with two different categories for threat assessment: *war potential* (the weapons deployed by other power/s) and *war threat* (the likelihood of a war), or capabilities and intentions in American terminology.<sup>42</sup>

If an approach like this is adopted, the U. S. Navy will continue to be a major measuring stick for Soviet naval capabilities and the point of departure for assigning missions to VMF simply by virtue of USN "war potential," even if the "war threat" presented by the U.S. will be judged negligible. First, the existence of nuclear weapons makes "war potential" of the U. S. tremendous even after very deep cuts in the strategic offensive forces. Second, it will take a rather prolonged period of global peace and stability before the U. S. reduces its conventional naval capabilities down to a level when the U. S. naval "war potential" could be discounted. There is, of course, no guarantee that the security relationship between the USSR and USA will not become more complicated again (for instance, if the Soviet Union or its successor state/s fail to be integrated into an international security system common with the West); then the "war threat" presented by the U.S. and their navy will naturally be seen by Moscow as more grave.

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<sup>41</sup>For the earlier threat assessment by VMF C-in-C, see, for instance, ADM V. Chernavin, "Vysokaya bditel'nost' i boevaya gotovnost' - velenie vremeni," *Morskoy sbornik*, 1988, no. 2, p.3, and, of course, N. P. Vyunenkov et al., *Voenno-morskoy flot: rol', perspektivy razvitiya, ispol'zovanie* (Moscow, Voenizdat, 1988), pp.3-10, 16-26; for a later threat assessment, see ADM V. Chernavin, "Bor'ba na kommunikatsiyakh: uroki voyn i sovremennost'," *Morskoy sbornik*, 1990, no. 2, p. 32; Captain 1st Rank, V. Mikhailov, "Morskaya strategiya SShA," *Voennaya mysl'*, 1990, no. 1, pp. 59-65.

<sup>42</sup>"Common Sense and Defence" *International Affairs*, 1990, no. 5, pp. 143, 144.

The changing political situation makes Soviet naval officers and civilian analysts look for new threats--or prove the absence of such. For instance, one of the suddenly prominent "new thinkers," Sergei Blagovolin (a scholar at the Academy's Institute for World Economics and International Relations--IMEMO), advocates a defensive military posture not directed specifically at any target nation or group of nations. In his opinion, this posture would be comparable to the French declaratory military posture of deterrence against all potential threats, East and West, assumed by Charles de Gaulle, with the difference that the posture proposed by the Soviet scholar would assume no hostile intentions in relations between major powers--an assumption de Gaulle would have hardly shared.

A military posture of this type leaves no room for such a prime instrument of power projection as the aircraft carrier. Blagovolin suggests the carriers' exclusion from the Soviet ship building program. At the same time, Blagovolin is concerned about the threats to global stability coming from military conflicts between Third World regional powers, such as the Iraq-Iran war; he agrees that such factors do affect the military policies of developed nations. Nevertheless, he avoids drawing conclusions from the above for the Soviet military posture and for solving the contradiction between his prescription against naval power projection and its role in containing and extinguishing conflicts in the Third World.<sup>43</sup>

It is noteworthy that an article by a VMF officer, very different in tone from Blagovolin's (it assumes current great threat from the West) published by the General Staff journal *Voennaya mysl'* (*Military Thought*), also points to the growing military strength of new Third World powers.<sup>44</sup> Whatever the threats of future, however, the United States

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<sup>43</sup>S. Blagovolin, "Geopoliticheskie aspekty oboronitel'noy dostatochnosti," *Kommunist*, 1990, no. 4, reproduced in *USSR Today. Soviet Media News and Features Digest*, March 20, 1990, pp. 5-6.

<sup>44</sup>Captain 1st Rank V. A. Galkovskiy, "O roli voenno-morskikh sil v mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniyakh," *Voennaya mysl'*, 1990, no. 1, p. 75.



continues to be the current threat for the purposes of determining the Soviet military posture, including the naval one.

The Soviet Navy must have two special problems in adapting to such military aspects of the "new thinking" as the defensive strategy and reasonable sufficiency. The defensive strategy is defined under a strong influence of Russia's military tradition as a land power.<sup>45</sup> It concerns itself predominantly with ground--keeping one's own without seizing the enemy's. Reasonable sufficiency is the minimum capability required to achieve these goals. Apparently the civilian academics who came up with these concepts have been as influenced by the Soviet/Russian infantryman's mindset as the Ground Forces generals who have run the General Staff. VMF has an obvious problem with this approach, as Admiral Chernavin has indicated:

...when we are asked today whether building aircraft carriers contradicts our defensive doctrine, my answer is: no. We see their main mission as carrying fighter aircraft, which can provide cover to our ships at a great distance where shore-based fighter aviation is of no help. This defensive mission is integral to the new *Tbilisi* aircraft carrier...But what does defensive mean? Some people understand it in a simplistic and primitive way. They think that once we have adopted such a doctrine, we can be only a passive side, to be on the defensive, to retreat in case of conflict into the depth of our territory. But modern war--on land, at sea, and in the air--is above all the war of maneuver. How can a combat ship fight while "sitting in a trench?" A submarine must find and sink the enemy. The mission of surface ships is, when necessary, to launch missile strikes against the enemy without waiting for him to enter our territorial waters.<sup>46</sup>

A second important distinction between the navy and the rest of the armed forces as far as application of reasonable sufficiency is concerned, is the dividing line drawn by the

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<sup>45</sup>The late Adm. Gorshkov was apparently aware of the land power mentality of his audience, because in his *Sea Power of the State* he found it necessary to explain that "[t]he naval forces do not form a front line, they are mobile, their actions are not related to advance, seizure or keeping of space. ... Victory in a naval battle or operation does not always mean the achievement of any territorial changes." Adm. S. Gorshkov, *Morskaya moshch' gosudarstva* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1979), p. 339.

<sup>46</sup>"Kommentariy Glavnokomanduyushchego Voenno-Morskim Flotom strany admirala flota V. N. Chernavina," *Pravda* October 19, 1989.



"new thinking" between general purpose and strategic forces. The level of general purpose forces is to be determined by the minimum requirements of defensive strategy, as specified above. The strategic forces strength is to be determined by the requirements to maintain superpower parity. The relationship between general purpose and strategic forces' levels appears therefore to be weaker or non-existent. This is logical when applied to ground forces and the strategic rocket forces: the latter's security puts rather minimal requirements on the former's size and deployment. This is far from the case, however, when it comes to the naval general purpose forces and SSBNs: the latter's safety is difficult to obtain without appropriate strength of the former.

### VMF MISSIONS.

The Soviet literature on naval matters shows relatively little consistency when describing VMF missions. The late Adm. Sergei Gorshkov distinguished the general fleet against fleet and fleet against shore missions, each of them embracing a variety of sub-missions, and the use of the navy for promoting the interests of the state in peacetime, especially through pressure in local conflicts.<sup>47</sup> The 1986 edition of the authoritative *Military Encyclopaedic Dictionary* in a similar fashion characterized navy missions as (a) destruction of enemy economic centers and military targets, and (b) destruction of his naval forces; these missions embrace, in the order listed, nuclear strikes against enemy land targets, destruction of his navy at sea and in port, interdiction of enemy's and defense of friendly SLOCs, aid to ground forces operations on continental theaters of strategic military actions, landing of assault groups and defending against enemy sea-borne assaults, transporting troops and materiel, etc.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Gorshkov, *Morskaya moshch' gosudarstva*, pp. 318-330, 346-372.

<sup>48</sup>*Voennyi entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1986), p. 141.

The latest authoritative effort to define the missions for the Soviet Navy came in a 1987 book *Navy: Role, Perspectives of Development, Missions*, written by a group of VMF scholar-officers, edited by N. P. Vyunenکو, and prefaced by Adm. Gorshkov, his last appearance in print. That book distinguishes the following missions: repulsion of aerospace attack, suppression of enemy military-economic potential, destruction of groupings of enemy armed forces on land, and participation in regional conflicts.<sup>49</sup> For the purposes of this study I will use these categories of navy missions as the latest put forward by VMF.

### **Repulsion of Aerospace Attack.**

This mission was brought into sharp focus by an unprecedentedly detailed and frank (for an unclassified publication) book edited by Vyunenکو.<sup>50</sup> "Repulsion of aerospace attack" is presented in the book as the primary mission for VMF: to destroy, at the very outset of hostilities, the platforms of enemy sea-based strategic weapons before they have a chance to launch missiles from under the water, from the surface of the oceans, and "as far as possible," from the air (apparently, a reference to ALCMs).<sup>51</sup> This mission involves:

- constant surveillance of enemy strategic weapons platforms, especially SSBNs, cruise missiles and their launch platforms, and also aircraft carriers, by friendly forces;
- split-second decision to destroy enemy platforms before they can launch;

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<sup>49</sup>Vyunenکو et al., *Voенно-морской флот*, pp. 196-268.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 221.

- operation on a global level of a number of task forces, consisting of attack submarines, surface ASW ships, and aircraft;
- enemy SSBNs are to be destroyed at the outset of hostilities irrespectively of nuclear or conventional character of the war;
- continuous deployment of large naval task forces.<sup>52</sup>

Destruction of enemy sea-born nuclear weapons platforms is not a new mission to the Soviet Navy. The use of VMF to destroy enemy SSBNs and other strategic systems (such as aircraft carriers) has been advocated in authoritative Soviet military writings since early 1960's.<sup>53</sup> Adm. Gorshkov viewed "the use of naval forces against enemy sea-based strategic nuclear systems in order to undermine or maximally weaken their strikes against land targets" as an integral component of the "fleet against shore" mission of VMF.<sup>54</sup> The goal of "destroying carriers before they approached the deck-based aviation launch points and of combating submarines before they launched ballistic missiles" was moved to the forefront in the early 1970's.<sup>55</sup> At that time ASW became an integral part of all Soviet major naval exercises.<sup>56</sup> But never before has it been singled out as the primary mission of VMF with the potential to become "a mission of state importance."<sup>57</sup>

Vyunenko's book is not the only source suggesting that the "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission was given a particular priority in the 1980's. A recent description of the "fifth" (mid-1980's to the "present") post-World War II period in the development of the Soviet naval art lists "destroying enemy naval offensive force

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 221-225, 231.

<sup>53</sup>James J. Tritten, *Soviet Naval Forces and Nuclear Warfare* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 57, 58.

<sup>54</sup>Gorshkov, *Morskaya moshch' gosudarstva*, p. 329.

<sup>55</sup>Captain 2nd Rank V. Dotsenko, "Soviet Art of Naval Warfare in the Postwar Period," *Morskoy Sbornik*, 1989, no. 7, p.27.

<sup>56</sup>Donald C. Daniel, "Trends and Patterns in Major Soviet Naval Exercises," in Paul J. Murphy, ed., *Naval Power in Soviet Policy* (U.S. G.P.O.: Washington, D.C., 1978), p. 226.

<sup>57</sup>Vyunenko N.P. et al., *Voennaya morskoy flot*, p. 223.

groupings to disrupt nuclear missile strikes against the territory of the USSR" as one of the top-priority missions of VMF.<sup>58</sup> Adm. Chernavin wrote in January 1989 that:

the engagement of an enemy navy's striking forces develops into an independent mission inasmuch as those forces are platforms for nuclear missile weapons by which it is possible to achieve both tactical and operational-strategic objectives.<sup>59</sup>

The strategic and operational concepts of the "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission are rooted in a concrete period in the evolution of Soviet military doctrine and in politics of the same period. From the late 1960's on, the Soviets were looking for a way to win a major war against NATO without being subject to nuclear attack. Thus appeared the concept of Soviet conventional theater offensive, with its primary objective being the destruction of enemy nuclear weapons and delivery systems by Soviet conventional weapons.<sup>60</sup>

The approach to operations against enemy SSBNs found in Vyuneneko's book suggests the same purpose in naval operations. It appears that enemy SSBNs are to be destroyed exclusively or primarily by conventional naval weapons: there is no mention of the use of nuclear weapons in this context, and the great emphasis on the need for detection of enemy SSBNs indicates that conventional weapons are to be used in "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack." If the authors had meant that nuclear weapons would play a weapon of choice in destroying enemy naval platforms carrying strategic offensive systems, they would have included in their detailed description of this mission a barrage by the "rocket-nuclear weapons" against the known and suspected areas of enemy SSBN patrols.

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<sup>58</sup>Dotsenko, "Soviet Art of Naval Warfare."

<sup>59</sup>Admiral of the Fleet V. Chernavin, "Prepare Yourself for Modern Warfare," *Morskoy Sbornik*, 1989, no. 1.

<sup>60</sup>See Phillip A. Petersen and John G. Hines, "The Conventional Offensive in Soviet Theater Strategy," *Orbis*, Fall 1983, pp.695-739.



For a number of reasons, this mission is incompatible with Gorbachev's "new thinking." The "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" aims at damage limitation, which contradicts Gorbachev's assertions about unwinnability of nuclear war.<sup>61</sup> This reflects the traditionalist thinking of top Soviet military officers. One of the better informed domestic critics of the Soviet defense establishment has hinted that the military establishment tends to view Gorbachev's pronouncements on unwinnability of nuclear war as propaganda strictly for consumption abroad:

It is evidently not only to the peace-loving foreign public, the Palme Commission or the Delhi Six that these words [Gorbachev's statement that there could be no defense against nuclear weapons] apply to. Surely statements by the head of our state and our Defence Council give a strategic guidance to all the military agencies involved.<sup>62</sup>

The "new thinkers" have pointed out that the "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" is also expensive beyond the means of today's and tomorrow's Soviet economy, as this mission requires a large number of ASW groups on station at all times throughout the world oceans.<sup>63</sup> Not only the civilian analysts are critical of the costs involved in building up a large blue water navy--the First Deputy Chief of General Staff, Army General Lobov, has expressed concern about the damage done by excessive spending on such a navy to the more crucial needs of ground forces.<sup>64</sup> (Establishing how many ships will be necessary for the Soviets to accomplish the "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" will require some sophisticated simulation.)

The political underpinnings of this mission are hardly out of the "new thinking" arsenal: the emphasis on constant readiness against massive nuclear surprise attack from the

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<sup>61</sup>RADM Thomas A. Brooks, "A Nuclear War-Fighting Treatise," *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1989, p.138..

<sup>62</sup>Arbatov, "How Much Defence Is Sufficient?" p. 38.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 41, 42.

<sup>64</sup>A. A. Kokoshin, V. N. Lobov, "Predvidenie," p. 176.

enemy (obviously, the United States) suggests that the two superpowers are politically (and therefore, militarily) in a sharp conflict. This assumption is still popular among at least some high-ranking military officers who criticize Gorbachev's national security policies. Among the sharpest critics is Adm. Gennadiy Khvatov, Commander of the Pacific Ocean Fleet, who has compared the current international situation of the Soviet Union to its isolation among hostile powers in 1939!<sup>65</sup>

The idea of attacking enemy (i. e., American) SSBNs at the outset of hostilities suggests a political thinking which holds that the conflict between the two socio-political system is so sharp that there will be no way to settle for less than a total victory once the hostilities begin. This approach could be faulted, as the "new thinkers" frequently do when it comes to the traditional national security thinking in the USSR, for an inability and unwillingness to understand how Soviet actions will be perceived by the other side.

Indeed; there is no indication whatsoever in Vyunenko's book that its authors have given any thought to the fact that the Americans view their SSBNs as their strategic reserve assuring retaliation (and thus, strategic stability) if the American ICBMs are destroyed by the first strike of Soviet ICBMs. Vyunenko and other authors seem to be unaware of or uninterested in the possibility that the course of action they propose, if ever implemented, is likely to provoke the release of all surviving U. S. strategic systems. This certainly runs against the grain of the "new thinking" which postulates that the main mission of the armed forces is to prevent a war, especially a nuclear one. Indeed, Defense Minister Yazov recently criticized as mistaken the past approach of increasing the Soviet offensive potential in order to prevent a war.<sup>66</sup>

The requirement to destroy enemy platforms with strategic weapons within minutes from the beginning of hostilities contradicts Gorbachev's concern about accidental nuclear

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<sup>65</sup>Stephen F. Iye, "Defense Issues at the Party Congress, *Report on the USSR*, July 27, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>66</sup>D. Yazov, 'Novaya model' bezopasnosti i vooruzhennye sily," *Kommunist*, 1989, no. 18, pp. 65, 66.

war and his insistence that politicians exercise full control over strategic forces.<sup>67</sup> The extremely short time span allowed for such a decision, as well as possible communication problems raise the specter of unsanctioned attack and of devolution of too much authority to VMF captains at sea, which they could use, if not to attack the enemy on their own, but to operate in an aggressive enough fashion to provoke confrontation where none was intended by the enemy.

The incipient changes in the political structure of the Soviet Union also cast doubt on the viability of the "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission. One after another the Union Republics are claiming the right to influence defense posture and decision-making. The latest and most significant signal of that sort came from the Ukraine, the major (after Russian Federation) supplier of manpower and materiel for the Soviet Armed Forces. It has declared a right to have its own army and to determine how the Ukrainian conscripts are used outside of the Ukraine.<sup>68</sup> The Russian Federation under Boris Yeltsin intends to have its own Minister of Defense (albeit without a ministry) to check on activities of the USSR Ministry of Defense. These developments suggest a likely decentralization of defense decision-making, (although Gorbachev has vehemently protested against this),<sup>69</sup> with individual republics obtaining the right to veto certain decisions made by the USSR President. Under such circumstances, it will be unrealistic to expect the extremely rapid decision-making necessary for a successful "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission executed at the outset of a conventional conflict.

Some in the Soviet military have been asking for an increased authority to act in the beginning of hostilities. For instance, an article on the lessons of World War II published in the General Staff monthly *Voennaya mysl'*, has proposed that commanders of formations of troops near the borders be given "the right to take on their own the adequate

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<sup>67</sup>"Press-konferentsiya M.S. Gorbacheva, *Izvestiya*, November 22, 1985.

<sup>68</sup>RFE/RL, *Daily Report*, no. 1' 4, October 11, 1990.

<sup>69</sup>"Rech' M. Gorbacheva pered fitserami," p. 10.



measures when the enemy raises combat readiness of his forces," because it is allegedly very difficult to distinguish between large-scale NATO exercises and preparation for an invasion.<sup>70</sup>

It is noteworthy that then CNO Adm. Carlisle Trost, when addressing Soviet naval officers, was asked a specific question on the alleged problem of distinguishing between exercises and an attack.<sup>71</sup> It is also of interest that the VMF was the only military service in the Soviet Union not caught completely by surprise by the German attack on June 22, 1941--thanks to their C-in-C disobeying the politicians, and using his own judgement to increase combat readiness, which is remembered and now praised by the Soviet military establishment.<sup>72</sup>

The "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission appears to contradict not only the "new thinking," but also some important ideas voiced by the Soviet military establishment itself even before Gorbachev's coming to power. The most notable example was the statement by then Chief of General Staff Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov made in 1984 that the proliferation and variety of nuclear armed systems in the arsenals of the superpowers makes a disarming first strike futile, as enough systems are bound to survive it in order to deliver an unacceptable damage in retaliation.<sup>73</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the 1979 edition of Adm. Gorshkov's *Sea Power of the State* clearly listed the mission of destruction of enemy sea-born nuclear weapons capable of reaching the Soviet homeland as part of the Fleet Versus Shore mission.<sup>74</sup> The "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission, however, is described as the heir of "the traditional naval mission--destruction of enemy fleet.". Its ancestor is described as the general naval battle,

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<sup>70</sup>Col. A. D. Borshchov, "Otrazhenie fashistskoy agressii: uroki i vyvody," *Voennaya mysl'*, 1990, no. 3, p. 22.

<sup>71</sup>"Admiral K. Trost daet otvety," *Morskoy sbornik*, 1990, no. 5, p. 56.

<sup>72</sup>Lt. General V. Serebryannikov, "Sootnoshenie politicheskikh i voennykh sredstv v zashchite sotsializma," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, 1987, no. 18, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>73</sup>"The Defense of Socialism: Experience of History and the Present Day," *Krasnaya zvezda*, May 9, 1984, translated in FBIS-Soviet Union, May 9, 1984, p. R19.

<sup>74</sup>Gorshkov, *Morskaya moshch' i gosudarstva*, p. 329.

which has found its modern incarnation in "decisive direct struggle of fleets armed with nuclear missiles and emphasizing submarines and aircraft in the first operations of the initial period of war."<sup>75</sup> In a somewhat similar manner, Adm. Chernavin referred to the "independent" character of such a mission, and emphasized the "naval battle" as "the principal method of winning victory over the enemy."<sup>76</sup>

The Soviet naval tradition is biased towards a combined arms approach. The Soviet Navy's greatest contribution has been traditionally seen as facilitating the operations of ground forces designed to seize enemy territory, the ultimate requirement for victory for a great land power. Indeed, VMF does not have its own strategy; it is utilized within the context of the general military strategy of the Soviet Union. Following this tradition, Adm. Gorshkov in 1979 viewed independent Fleet-Against-Fleet operations as gradually losing their primacy to Fleet-Against-Shore operations. The latter embraced destruction of enemy military and economic targets on land, and therefore included defense of friendly and suppression of enemy sea-based platforms of strategic nuclear systems.<sup>77</sup>

If VMF's main mission is against the shore, then all naval policies (weapons acquisition, personnel, planning, etc.) have to be reasonably closely coordinated with the policies of the other services and the General Staff. Asserting that the main mission of VMF is that of Fleet-Against-Fleet and that it goes back to the grand tradition of a general battle for command of the sea would mean greater independence for the Navy as a bureaucracy. It was typical of various bureaucratic agencies during the Brezhnev era to seek immunity from centralized policy-making in pursuit of their corporate self-interest, an important condition for bureaucratic growth at the times of economic decline. It appears that at least some elements in the VMF command attempted to use the "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission as an instrument for gaining a measure of such an immunity.

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<sup>75</sup>Vyunenko et al., *Voenno-morskoy flot*, p.221.

<sup>76</sup>Chernavin, "Prepare Yourself for Modern Warfare," p. ??????

<sup>77</sup>Gorshkov, *Morskaya moshch' gosudarstva*, pp. 323-330.

This would be incompatible with Gorbachev's emphasis on economizing and on civilian intervention in military planning.<sup>78</sup>

The "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission seems to be the product of the traditional war-fighting mentality of the Soviet military, as well as of specific political circumstances of the early- to mid-1980s. (Given the slow tempo of Soviet publishing industry and research activities, for Vyunenکو's book to be ready for publication in early 1987, its manuscript must have been finished by the mid-1986 at the latest, its writing probably must have taken place between 1984 and 1986, and the basic ideas for it must have been formulated between 1982 and 1984.) At that time, the ageing Kremlin oligarches apparently succumbed to the war hysteria which they themselves had unleashed to stop the deployment of American INF forces in Western Europe. According to the former chief of the KGB station in London, Oleg Gordievsky, the Soviet leadership was seriously concerned about the possibility of a surprise attack by NATO, a concern heightened by their fear that the warheads of Pershing 2 missiles could penetrate their underground command bunkers. In Gordievsky's judgment, the Soviet leaders' ignorance of the outside world, narrow-mindedness induced by the Communist ideology, and resulting mirror-imaging were responsible for such a distorted vision.<sup>79</sup>

Under such circumstances, the military might have been tasked with finding all ways possible to mitigate the consequences of a nuclear strike against the Soviet command and control centers. The special role for the navy in that undertaking was probably due to the actual (C-4) and planned (D-5) deployments of American SLBM's with substantial (C-4) and high (D-5) hard target kill capabilities. There are some indications that at least until very recently the VMF was to attack enemy nuclear weapons platforms at the outset of hostilities. In a newspaper interview, a skipper of a Soviet nuclear submarine described his

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<sup>78</sup>Such an approach, it should be noted, would also contradict the point made in the another chapter of Vyunenکو's book that the joint character of military operations is likely to increase, and service independence will decline further; see Vyunenکو N.P. et al., *Voenno-morskoy flot*, p. 35.

<sup>79</sup>Oleg Gordievsky, "Pershing Paranoia in the Kremlin," *The Times*, February 27, 1990.



task as follows: "Every minute hundreds of foreign nuclear missiles are targeted on the USSR. ... Our mission is to neutralize them at the critical moment."<sup>80</sup> Now that Gorbachev has proclaimed the end of the "cold war" and the absurdity of any preparations for fighting a nuclear war, the "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission must have no or minimal political foundation.

Whatever plans might have been developed by the VMF for the future, the reality until now has been that the wartime Soviet strategic ASW capability has been quite limited because of an absence of a viable open ocean air support and other technical factors. The crisis condition of the Soviet economy today and in the foreseeable future appears to preclude a very expensive program (apparently, such as envisioned by Vyunenkov and his authors) needed to give the Soviets such a capability.

To sum it up, the "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack" mission for VMF was rooted in the traditional Soviet military-political thinking as well as in the specific political circumstances which immediately preceded Gorbachev's ascendance. Political changes introduced by Gorbachev, the resulting revisions in military doctrine, and the economic realities are likely to make this mission obsolete (with the possible exception of extended air defense against ALCM's and SLCM's)<sup>81</sup> even before it can affect the overall posture and composition of VMF.

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<sup>80</sup>S. Taranov, "Moryak, podvodnik, komandir," *Izvestiya*, July, 31, 1988.

<sup>81</sup>I am indebted to Capt. Norman Channell for pointing out to me the importance of extended air defense against cruise missiles.



### **Suppression of Enemy Military-Economic Potential.**

Vyunenko's book lumps several missions together under this rubric:

- Strikes by sea-based strategic systems, mostly SLBMs and SLCMs, against enemy industrial and political centers, naval facilities, command and control facilities and other strategic targets.<sup>82</sup>
- SLOC interdiction.
- Interference with the extraction of energy and raw material resources from the sea bed.

### ***Strikes By Sea-Based Strategic Systems Against Enemy Land Targets.***

SLBM/SLCM strikes against enemy territory are generally consistent with the idea of maintaining a retaliatory capability deterring the potential aggressor from a first use of nuclear weapons, a concept compatible with the "new thinking" and defensive strategy. There appears to be a consensus among both military and civilian analysts in the Soviet Union that doing away with nuclear deterrence is utopian for the foreseeable future. (Gorbachev's proposal for a complete nuclear disarmament by the year 2000 is now ignored by most Soviets writing on the subject as unrealistic; only some military officers refer to it in order to prove the perfidy of the West, which has not agreed to it.) Nevertheless, there are substantial differences between the traditional approach to this mission and the "new thinking." When it comes to nuclear forces, a seasoned observer of Soviet military affairs points to two crucial issues in the debate:

The first is whether "military-strategic" (nuclear) parity with the West should continue to be maintained on a "quantitative" basis or be redefined on a "qualitative" basis.

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<sup>82</sup>Vyunenko et al., *Voenno-moi skoy flot*, p. 236.

The former relies on parity in numbers of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles and warheads, while the latter relies on parity in ensuring the infliction of an unacceptably damaging second strike. A second but closely related issue involves whether counter-force or counter-value targeting should define future military requirements.<sup>83</sup>

These issues have become a subject of a rather venomous argument between civilian analysts suggesting that the USSR could exercise deterrence through vastly and even unilaterally reduced counter-value military arsenals, with military analysts arguing the opposite.<sup>84</sup>

The approach to be chosen depends essentially on political factors. At issue again is the threat assessment and the political perception of the U. S. and other nuclear powers, which will determine the target selection and requirements for the Soviet strategic offensive forces, including their sea-based elements. The "new thinkers" argue that a relatively small fraction of available strategic arsenals (from 5 to 400 warheads) will be sufficient retaliation if they can attack major urban areas of the U. S. This argument is based on a political assessment of the U.S. as a democracy unwilling to contemplate even a minimum damage from a retaliatory strike and capable of restraining the more aggressive elements in its own political-military elite.<sup>85</sup>

The counter argument of the military is, to use the terminology of Soviet military science, mostly military-technical, but it has an underlying socio-political message of its own. It measures the requirements for Soviet nuclear forces with reference to various "worst case" scenarios, and concludes that only a rough numerical parity with the U.S. (and other nuclear powers in case of very deep cuts) can insure Soviet security. In fact,

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<sup>83</sup>William E. Odom, "The Soviet Military in Transition," *Problems of Communism*, May-June 1990, p. 56.

<sup>84</sup>See, for instance, Ye. Volkov, "Ne raz"yasnyaet a zatumanivaet," *Krasnaya zvezda*, September 28, 1989; Ye. Volkov, "V predelakh razumnoi dostatochnosti," *Krasnaya zvezda*, November 30, 1989; I. Malashenko, "Paritet vchera i segodnya," *Moskovskie novosti*, no. 31, July 30, 1989.

<sup>85</sup>See, for instance, Radomir Bogdanov, Andrei Kortunov, "'Minimal'noe sderzhivanie': utopiya ili real'naya perspektiva," *Moskovskie novosti*, June 4, 1989; A. Nuykin, "O boegolovkakh, dobre i professionalizme," *Moskovskie novosti*, July 30, 1989; Malashenko, "Paritet vchera i segodnya;" Arbatov, "How Much Defence Is Sufficient?" p. 36.

this is the old approach of achieving robust deterrence through maximizing the warfighting capability of the Soviet strategic offensive forces. The implied socio-political message is what Gen. Vladimir Lobov and Dr. Andrei Kokoshin described as a typical Soviet delusion:

When evaluating the military-political situation in the world, we are far from taking fully into account the fact that today's bourgeois-democratic regimes in the major capitalist states, even when they have conservative governments, are sharply different from the extreme right regimes like the ones of Hitler and Mussolini. **Until now** some of our scholars, when estimating the probability of war, practically ignore these **qualitative changes** and the impact of World War II on the social consciousness in the majority of developed capitalist nations.<sup>86</sup> [Emphasis added.]

In other words, the Western leaders are unlikely to do anything that can result even in a very limited use of nuclear weapons against their nations, because their societies have a much lower threshold of pain tolerance than the Soviet military planners, obsessed with their World War II examples, tend to ascribe to them.

This argument has a direct bearing on the mission broadly described as strikes by sea-based strategic systems against various enemy land targets. The scenarios for such strikes found in Vyunenکو's book appear to conflict with the "new thinking" in several ways. The target set proposed in Vyunenکو's book includes enemy industrial and political centers, naval facilities, command and control facilities and other strategic targets.<sup>87</sup> While targeting industrial and political centers is compatible with the concept of retaliation in the "new thinking," the requirement to attack naval facilities is typical of damage limitation and war-fighting, and therefore unnecessary if "new thinking" is implemented. The same goes for the destruction of enemy command and control facilities, with the additional

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<sup>86</sup>Kokoshin, Lobov, "Predviden e," p. 182.

<sup>87</sup>Vyunenکو et al., *Voenno-moi koy flot*, p. 236.

disadvantage of making war termination before the release of practically all strategic systems unlikely.

The large target set proposed by VMF requires that Soviet SSBNs with "medium-range" ballistic missiles, SSGN's and SSG's get within firing range from the enemy landmass (apparently North America, since the Soviets talk about the need for "lengthy passages" and for "overcoming ASW barriers.")<sup>88</sup> This may have several implications unwelcome from the point of view of "new thinking." First and foremost, there is the problem of command and control. As Vyunenکو's book has it,

Strategic weapons platforms are usually deployed to distant areas where the enemy as a rule has great opportunities for achieving superiority in power supply for radio-electronic suppression of communications.<sup>89</sup>

It would take some time, according to Vyunenکو, for the command for the release of SLBMs and SLCMs to be received by submarines, which would also require additional time for deploying to launching positions, getting close to the surface in order to communicate, avoiding enemy ASW forces, and preparing for launching. So,

In order to provide for a simultaneous strike by the maximum number of submarines, the **nuclear weapons release command should be given to them far in advance of the designated launch time.**<sup>90</sup> [Emphasis added]

This contradicts Gorbachev's stated objective of eliminating the possibility of an accidental nuclear war (resulting from a communications problem) and of avoiding situations when

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 238.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 242.



the political leaders lock themselves into an irrevocable decision to use nuclear weapons, and makes SSBN's more suitable as strategic reserve.<sup>91</sup>

The character of deployment of SSBNs proposed by the VMF in Vyunenko's book (wide dispersal throughout the oceans) may also contradict some important political and technical realities. Keeping SSBN's close to home waters in bastions allows for their better support and security, improved C3, and shorter transit time to launch stations.<sup>92</sup> In addition, having Soviet submarines carrying strategic weapons roaming on patrols far away from home today has an increased potential for political embarrassment as a minimum, and a catastrophe as a maximum. The Soviet government is hardly eager to see another SSBN of theirs disabled near the American shores. It would be not only bad political advertisement and an untimely reminder to the American public of the Soviet nuclear threat, but might also result in the U.S. learning more about the Soviet subs than the Soviet would like them to know. Even more grave is the potential for a mutiny or some other form of a disciplinary failure on board. Addressing the problems of the Soviet manpower in 1989, Gorbachev expressed concern about the poor discipline of servicemen who have access to weapons of mass destruction.<sup>93</sup> Given the current social tensions in general, low morale among both commissioned officers and enlisted men, atmosphere charged with ethnic violence, and the tradition of mutinies from the battleship *Potemkin* in 1905 to the *Storozhevoy* destroyer in 1975, a certain prudence would dictate a posture minimizing distant patrols by SSBNs, SSGNs and SSGs. It is safer to keep them closer to home, where crews would not be subjected to the pressure of long cruises and where a mutiny could be quickly suppressed.

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<sup>91</sup>I am indebted to Capt. Channell for this insight.

<sup>92</sup>I am indebted to Capt. Norman Channel for these insights.

<sup>93</sup>"Yazov Addresses 3 July Session," FBIS-Soviet Union, July 5, 1989, p. ????

This is essentially a posture recommended by Alexei Arbatov:

To reinforce land-based missile forces, it would apparently be enough for us to have one new long-range submarine missile system capable of hitting targets from near the Soviet coast and hence making it unnecessary to venture on to the high seas through enemy anti-submarine barriers. In the case of lower SOF [strategic offensive forces] levels, the Delta-4 submarine, which carries 16 SS-N-23 missiles tipped with 64 warheads in all, would apparently be more attractive than Typhoon with its 200 warheads mounted on 20 SS-N-20 missiles. The former makes it possible within the limits of the same number of warheads to distribute forces over a greater number of launching positions than the latter, thereby adding to the survivability of our missile-carrying submarine fleet.<sup>94</sup>

There is a glaring discrepancy between the traditional approach of VMF to the employment of its strategic systems, and the proposals advanced under the "new thinking" umbrella. Vyunenko's book proposes a counterforce first strike against the most time-urgent targets by sea-based strategic systems, carried out together with other components of the strategic forces. At the same time, it leaves open the possibility of retaliatory strikes against not time-urgent targets, a definition apparently emphasizing countervalue targets.<sup>95</sup> More recent VMF pronouncements on the subjects are ambiguous. Thus, a 1989 Morskoy sbornik article lists as the first mission of the navy for the *perestroika* era "delivering retaliatory and surprise counterblows against the enemy..."<sup>96</sup> Surely, retaliatory countervalue strikes can hardly be described as a "surprise"! This formulation appears to be a way out for VMF to preserve a counterforce option for a warfighting scenario.

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<sup>94</sup>Arbatov, "How Much Defence Is Sufficient?" p. 37.

<sup>95</sup>Vyunenko et al., *Voennno-morskoy flot*, p. 242, 243.

<sup>96</sup>Dotsenko, "Soviet Art of Naval Warfare."

Reconciliation of the counterforce/countervalue deterrence-through-warfighting scenarios with deterrence-through-minimum-countervalue-strikes scenarios will not be a simple process on a policy-making level. Shocking as the denunciations of the counterforce mission by the "new thinkers" might be to the VMF, these civilian academics' only influence (in the absence of any real public pressure on the military in "military-technical" aspects via the Supreme Soviet) on the Navy might be only by getting the top political leadership, primarily Gorbachev, on their side. It is a rather technical issue of little concern to the public, and it is not clear at all that it is high enough on Gorbachev's agenda to put his political weight behind it now. After all, there is no immediate political price to pay if VMF continues with the traditionally defined counterforce mission. Given the apparent confusion in all policy areas in the USSR, the military's openly expressed discontent with many aspects of Gorbachev's *perestroika* and "new thinking," their continuing protests against the decision to recognize the ABM LPAR near Krasnoyarsk as a violation of the ABM Treaty,<sup>97</sup> it is unlikely that a thorough wholesale revision of the SSBNs and SSGNs targeting has been already undertaken and implemented.

The economic pressures and considerations of safety and improved command and control are more likely to have already had an impact on **how** the mission of strikes against enemy military-economic-administrative targets is operationally implemented now as far as the patterns of deployment of the submarine fleet are concerned. The real change in this mission is probably still in the future, if the economic pressures drastically reduce the Navy's slice in the military pie, an eventuality pointed to rather directly by Dr. Andrei Kokoshin and General Vladimir Lobov.<sup>98</sup> Only then can a reduction of Soviet submarine fleet through retirement of old platforms with little to no replacement by the new ones result

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<sup>97</sup>See John W. R. Lepingwell, "Soviet Early Warning Radars, Debate.I," *Report on the USSR*, August 17, 1990, pp. 14, 15.

<sup>98</sup>A. A. Kokoshin, V. N. Lobov, "Predvidenie," p. 176.



in a certain adoption of a countervalue posture for the Soviet sea-based strategic weapons systems--simply because there would be not enough of them for a counterforce one.

Passage of time is also likely to contribute to a change in the Soviet posture in the direction of the "new thinking," as the generation of senior officers retires and a new one takes over. There are signs that many junior and middle ranking officers today are becoming increasingly opposed to the Marxist-Leninist political orthodoxy. An analysis of the voting patterns of military deputies to the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies has shown that while senior officers cast only 16 percent of their votes for the reformist "Democratic Russia" bloc, and 82 percent of their votes were cast against, "among the middle-level ... officers the figure is 63 percent (37 percent against), and among junior officers -- 73 percent (22 percent against).<sup>99</sup> It is reasonable to expect that among the new generation of VMF commanders the attachment to nuclear warfighting formulas, derived from the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, will be much weaker than in those in charge of VMF today.

### *SLOC interdiction.*

Another mission grouped under the umbrella of "Suppression of Enemy Military-Economic Potential" is SLOC interdiction. It was described as a strategically important element of the "Fleet Against Shore" mission by Adm. Gorshkov in the 1970's.<sup>100</sup> SLOC interdiction was given a prominent place in Soviet naval exercises in the 1970s, including *Okean 75*.<sup>101</sup> A recent Soviet book on defense economics has described it as especially

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<sup>99</sup>Julia Wishnevsky, "The Two Sides of the Barricades in Russian Politics Today," *Report on the USSR*, August 24, 1990, p. 17.

<sup>100</sup>Gorshkov, *Morskaya moshch' gosudarstva*, p. 329.

<sup>101</sup>Daniel, "Trends and Patterns in Major Soviet Naval Exercises," pp. 127, 228.



important because of NATO's dependence on SLOC for crucial supplies.<sup>102</sup> Vyunenکو's book also pays considerable attention to SLOC interdiction, although it clearly ranks them below the missions described earlier.<sup>103</sup> An additional boost to this mission's prominence has been given by the disclosure that Adm. Chernavin has written a book entitled *The Struggle on Sea Lines of Communications: the Lessons of Past Wars and Today*, and by publication of selections from it in the *Morskoy sbornik*.<sup>104</sup>

Chernavin's choice of SLOC interdiction as a topic for a book, which is bound to be read as the C-in-C's manifesto, suggests that as far as the VMF command is concerned, this mission is coming to receive a higher priority, probably because it is easier to fit SLOC interdiction within the framework of defensive military strategy than "Repulsion of Aerospace Attack;" it also seems to be less controversial than the mission of strikes against enemy military-industrial targets with its conflict between the countervalue and counterforce scenarios. Chernavin says that in case of a protracted war SLOC interdiction will be the main component of the armed struggle at sea.<sup>105</sup> He maintains that SLOC interdiction mission is fully compatible with the defensive strategy:

One of the defensive missions which the VMF can solve in a war forced upon us, would be the struggle for ocean and sea lines of communications, which are of great importance for functioning of the economy, transportation of troops, military equipment, fuel and other materiel to the continental military theaters, without which the major imperialist powers would be unable to conduct successful operations on land fronts.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Col. S. A. Bartenev, *Ekonomicheskoe protivoborstvo v voyne* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1986), p.141.

<sup>103</sup>Vyunenکو et al., *Voенно-morskoy flot*, pp. 244-249.

<sup>104</sup>Adm. V. Chernavin, "Bor'ba na kommunikatsiyakh: uroki voyn i sovremennost'," *Morskoy sbornik*, January 1990, pp. 18-28, February 1990, pp. 29-40.

<sup>105</sup>Chernavin, "Bor'ba na kommunikatsiyakh: uroki voyn i sovremennost'," *Morskoy sbornik*, February 1990, p. 39

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 40.

But the "new thinkers" consider SLOC interdiction as conceived by Chernavin to be incompatible with the defensive strategy.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, Chernavin says that "effective" SLOC interdiction dictates the necessity of "massive strikes against the shipbuilding centers and ports. This would inevitably lead to an escalation."<sup>108</sup> This, of course, would defeat the whole purpose of the defensive military strategy--avoid destructive and pointless nuclear warfighting. The context of Chernavin's statement makes it quite clear that he meant it to be a rebuttal to the proponents of defensive strategy. He accuses NATO of harboring plans for "offensive operations" and even "preventive measures" against the USSR--a traditional view at variance with the political premises of the "new thinking." The Soviet military doctrine is defensive, according to Chernavin, because the Soviet Armed Forces will never be used "for aggressive purposes"--the traditional way of avoiding a discussion of the offensive nature of Soviet military strategy. Reasonable sufficiency and defensive doctrine for the VMF, the C-in-C continues, can be achieved only in the course of naval arms control and confidence-building measures.<sup>109</sup> Since Chernavin knows that both ideas are unacceptable to the U.S., and that recently some "new thinkers" have been dismissing the concept of parity between the U.S. and USSR as unnecessary and unaffordable, his pronouncements can be read as a statement of disagreement with the defensive strategy and reasonable sufficiency, and an attempt to torpedo their implementation by insistence on naval arms control with the U.S.

A gradual reconciliation of the traditional naval views and the "new thinking" on the subject of SLOC interdiction is possible in the future. The political changes unfolding today in Europe can help to remove the offensive edge from the SLOC interdiction mission by eliminating the probability of a Soviet-American war in Europe. The impossibility of such a war is obvious to the "new thinkers," but the Soviet military high command

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<sup>107</sup>Arbatov, "How Much Defence Is Sufficient?" p. 41,

<sup>108</sup> Chernavin, "Bor'ba na kommunikatsiyakh: uroki voyn i sovremennost'," *Morskoy sbornik*, February 1990, p. 40.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*

continues to stick to its traditional views pending a drastic reduction in NATO capabilities and an establishment of an all-encompassing new European security system, a development which is still years ahead. There is possible disagreement between the naval traditionalists and the "new thinkers" when it comes to the composition of forces required for SLOC interdiction. Chernavin regards submarines and aviation as crucial for this mission.<sup>110</sup> The "new thinkers," following in the steps of the "young school" of the 1920's, view submarines and aircraft positively because they are well suited for the defense of the Soviet coast line, as opposed to large surface blue-water combatants.<sup>111</sup> But if Chernavin implies the need for carrier-based aviation for SLOC interdiction, such a view is bound to meet with resistance of the "new thinkers." (On "new thinking" and aircraft carriers, see below.)

If the Soviet Navy is not to interdict SLOC in the Atlantic, what other contingencies for SLOC interdiction are there? Situations like the current Persian Gulf crisis might provide a model for future SLOC interdiction-mission for the VMF, especially in view of expectations both among some "new thinkers" and naval officers (as discussed earlier) that the growth of Third World regional powers presents one of the important threats to future security and stability. There is a general agreement among both the conservative and liberal segments of the Soviet/Russian elite that their nation should not relinquish its great power status, with the difference that the conservatives have a unilateralist approach close to that traditionally pursued by the Kremlin, while the liberals want the Soviet Union to discharge its great power military responsibilities as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and within the framework of the UN.<sup>112</sup> (We should not discount, however, a different approach recently formulated by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who has

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>111</sup>Arbatov, "How Much Defence Is Sufficient?" p. 42; Kokoshin, Lobov, "Predvidenie," p. 176.

<sup>112</sup>For liberal views, see Andrei Kortunov, "Vneshnyaya politika: pro i contra diskussii," *Kommunist*, no. 12, August 1990, p. 116.



appealed to the Russians to mind their own business and in effect turn isolationist.)<sup>113</sup> The second approach is clearly related to the situations like the current naval blockade of Iraq (the Soviets view naval blockade as a special case of SLOC interdiction)<sup>114</sup>. There are so far no putative requirements for Soviet participation in such a SLOC interdiction mission; if and when they come, these requirements are likely to be much more modest than the ones for SLOC interdiction in a Soviet-American global confrontation.

### **Destruction of Groupings of Enemy Armed Forces.**

In Vyunenko's book two missions are in effect put under the same umbrella of Destruction of Groupings of Enemy Armed Forces: that of cooperation with the other services in combat against enemy ground forces, a mission traditionally assigned to the Soviet Navy, and that of achieving command of the sea.<sup>115</sup> Compared to Adm. Gorshkov's pronouncements made 10 years earlier, the emphasis on sea control as a necessary adjunct to support for ground operations has been somewhat strengthened.<sup>116</sup> The impact of politics on this mission depends both on interpretations of the defensive strategy and on future geopolitical developments. There are no reasons to doubt that the mission of direct support for ground operations will remain: it was not eliminated even during the worst days of VMF in the 1920s to mid-1930s. It is difficult, however, to predict how the VMF will be configured to carry out such a mission in the European TVDs in view of the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and in the event of effective removal of the Ukraine, Moldavia and the Baltic republics from the Soviet national security system. (Such an assessment will be undertaken in the course of the subsequent research project.) But

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<sup>113</sup>Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Kak nam obustroit' Rossiю?* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1990), passim.

<sup>114</sup>Vyunenko et al., *Voенно-morskoy flot*, p. 248.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 250, 261, 262.

<sup>116</sup>Gorshkov, *Morskaya moshch' gosudarstv*, p.



one has reasons to doubt that Vyunenko's suggestion that support of ground operations requires sea control, or at least its limited version (temporary sea control in a sector of an oceanic TVD)<sup>117</sup> will become more than merely a wish.

Extending the battle thousands of miles from the Soviet shores can be escalatory. The Soviet naval leaders have been unwilling so far to recognize the basic asymmetry of Soviet and American national interests. The Soviet Union, largely self-sufficient in natural resources, and now without any overseas allies (Cuba hardly counts as one now), simply does not have vital interests far away from its shores. ((The current Soviet dependence on food imports is a different matter, because these imports come from the same Western nations that the Soviet military doctrine continues to identify as potential enemies; to deny food to the Soviets, these nations need no recourse to SLOC interdiction.) Not so with the United States, which continues to have global economic and political interests, as clearly demonstrated by the current Persian Gulf crisis. "New thinkers" are likely to argue that any attempt to fight the U.S. Navy in waters not contiguous to the Soviet Union, will constitute unnecessary horizontal escalation, will only prevent localization and containment of a conflict, and as such will contradict the defensive strategy.

Even more important for the eventual fate of this mission will be the issue of air support. High ranking VMF officers insist that aircraft carriers will play a key role in any future war, especially a conventional one.<sup>118</sup> As Adm. Chernavin indicated, in the Soviet view, operations of surface groups far away from the friendly shore are impossible without air cover provided by aircraft carriers.<sup>119</sup> But the Soviet aircraft carrier program, which involves building three "real" Tbilisi-class carriers is now a highly charged political issue. The "new thinkers" have denounced the carriers as incompatible with the defensive

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<sup>117</sup>Vyunenko et al., *Voenno-morskoy flot*, p. 262.

<sup>118</sup>Adm. V. Ponikarovskiy, Capt. 1st Rank O. Mrykin (Ret.), "Poteri avianostsev vo Vtoroy mirovoy voyne, *Morskoy sbornik*, no. 7, 1990, .p. 28.

<sup>119</sup>"Kommentariy Glavnokomanduyushchego." For a similar opinioin from a rather caustic critic of VMF problems, see Captain 1st Rank A. Bobrakov, "Ot neznakomstva s potrebnostyami voyny," *Morskoy sbornik*, 1990), no. 6, p. 5.

strategy. The Tbilisi-class carriers, they argue, if deployed where needed most, i.e., in the Barentz Sea and the Sea of Japan, will be threatening to Scandinavia and Japan. Their existence itself "attests to the fact the Soviet naval strategy remains oriented to the possibility of a sustained non-nuclear large-scale naval conflict," which contradicts the defensive strategy's dictum that a major conventional "conflict will inevitably grow into a nuclear war."<sup>120</sup> Other civilian analysts conclude that the Soviet Union is economically incapable of competing with the U.S both in the number of aircraft carriers and in the skills needed to operate them, and therefore should not waste resources on a carrier program.<sup>121</sup> The real Soviet strength, maintains another academic specialist, is in attack submarines, "land-based missile-carrying naval aircraft, small ships and boats for coastal operations," and concludes, with a reference to the Brookings Institution's William W. Kaufmann (a prominent analyst who is skeptical of U.S. naval capabilities) that these Soviet forces will be enough to sink "all NATO aircraft carriers operating off [the Soviet] coast."<sup>122</sup>

Some influential Ground Forces officers also have doubts about the Soviet aircraft carriers. First Deputy Chief of General Staff Army Gen. V. Lobov, without directly attacking the carrier program, has described the last Tsar's and Stalin's attempts to build expensive ocean-going navies as a dangerous waste of resources, which should have been spent on the ground forces, crucial for Russia/USSR's defense.<sup>123</sup> Major Gen. Kirilenko, who has engaged civilian analysts in a heated polemic about reasonable sufficiency, has implicitly disavowed the aircraft carriers program, saying that the current leadership of the Ministry of Defense is not responsible for decisions taken more than 10 years ago.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Andrei Kortunov, Igor Malashenko, "'Tbilisi,' 'Riga' and the rest?" *New Times*, 1989, no. 51, p. 27.

<sup>121</sup> G. Sturua, "Nuzhny li nam 'avianostsy'," *Moskovskie novosti*, January 28, 1990; Blagovolin, "Geopoliticheskie aspekty oboronitel'noy dostatochnosti," reproduced in *USSR Today. Soviet Media News and Features Digest*, March 20, 1990, p. 33.

<sup>122</sup> Arbatov, "How Much Defence Is Sufficient?" p. 42.

<sup>123</sup> A. A. Koshin, V. N. Lobov, "Predvidenie," pp. 175, 176.

<sup>124</sup> V. Zabro lin, "Zabota o bez opasnosti ili...o snizhenii bezopasnosti?" *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, 1990, no. 11, p. 43.

There has been no open criticism of the Tbilisi class carrier program in the VMF, but there are indications of muted dissent there. In an article published by *Morskoy sbornik* in 1988, a Vice Admiral and two Captains 1st Rank praised the modest naval program of the 1920s, oriented towards coastal defense and based on a realistic assessment of the nation's economic capabilities, and criticized the attempts made in the 1930s to achieve a quantitative parity with the potential enemy's navy. This program included construction of battleships and heavy cruisers, and design of two aircraft carriers, an effort that "consumed substantial resources," and had to be scrapped in 1940 in view of an imminent German attack. Moreover, the ships were built without "a clear understanding of their mission." The authors recommend that today's VMF pays more attention to fashioning its forces for realistic missions, and to providing them with requisite logistics instead of buying new ships for their own sake.<sup>125</sup> It is quite probable that the authors had in mind, among other things, the Tbilisi-class carriers: very expensive ships, whose construction was approved in 1976 at the peak of Soviet global ambitions, when America appeared unable to recover from the defeat in Vietnam and Watergate, but which seem rather out of place in today's Soviet economic conditions and retreat even in Eastern Europe. Indeed, it appears that the VMF has been very poorly prepared for handling such complex ships as aircraft carriers.<sup>126</sup> Thus, the future of the aircraft carriers and therefore of the Soviet ability to fight for sea control away from their coastal waters is in doubt.

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<sup>125</sup>R. Golosov, V. Koryavko, E. Shevelev, "Nekotorye uroki iz sozdaniya otechestvennogo flota," *Morskoy sbornik*, 1988, no. 7, pp. 24-26.

<sup>126</sup>Yu. Gladkevich, "Na puti k o eanu," *Krasnaya zvezda*, April 26, 1990.



### Navy in Regional Conflicts.

The build-up of the Soviet surface navy of the late 1960's-1970's coincided with the growing Soviet involvement in the Third World conflicts. (See above on on Adm. Gorshkov's pronouncements regarding the navy's special role in promoting the interests of the Soviet state world-wide ) Aid to the Third World "national-liberation" and other leftist movements continued to be described as an important mission for the Soviet Armed Forces as late as 1987.<sup>127</sup> Since that time, however, the idea of military involvement in the Third World has been under consistent attack from the "new thinkers." After returning from a tour of Angola and Mozambique, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze described these Soviet Third World allies as having "the largest and best armed military forces in the region and the most shocking poverty," and denounced the Soviet military aid to these nations as "the policy of pseudosupport."<sup>128</sup> Some in the Soviet military have begun to say that it is both necessary and possible to resolve Third World conflicts through negotiations and mediation, without recourse to military force or threats of its use.<sup>129</sup> Alexei Arbatov has directly addressed the role of the Soviet Navy in the Third World conflicts:

the extension of naval confrontation with the United States ... in conflict areas involving developing countries--the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, the South Atlantic--is for objective geostrategic reasons the most disadvantageous sphere of rivalry for [the Soviet Union],...having no direct bearing on the security of the Soviet Union...<sup>130</sup>

Some of the "new thinkers" are beginning to show interest in geopolitics, in Russia's unique role in providing stability for the "world island" of Eurasia, and in

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<sup>127</sup>Krishin et al., *Politicheskoe soderzhanie sovremennykh voyn*, p. 164.

<sup>128</sup>Shevardnadze, "Konsolidatsiya KPSS."

<sup>129</sup>See Col. B. V. Molostov, "Razblokirovanie krizisnykh situatsiy," *Voennaya mysl'*, 1990, no. 6, pp. 62-70

<sup>130</sup>Arbatov, "How Much Defense Is Sufficient?" p. 42.



understanding the past and future of Soviet/Russian--American relations in terms of domination of the Eurasian Heartland by Russia as a natural land power, and the domination of the Eurasian continental edge (the Rimland) by the natural maritime power, the United States.<sup>131</sup> It follows from this argument that Moscow's preoccupation should be with the Eurasian security, while the high seas and exotic nations across them should be left to the Americans to manage, if they wish to do so. For "new thinkers," the only justification for naval presence in the Third World is to provide C3 facilities for the Soviet SSBNs.<sup>132</sup>

The usual conservative opponents of the "new thinking" are split when it comes to the Third World involvements and the VMF role in them. Many conservative Russian nationalists, although suspicious of the West, full of admiration of the military as a true Russian national institution, and loathing the "new thinkers," nevertheless see the military and other aid to various Third World regimes as a waste of resources which Russia so desperately needs--and thus implicitly agree with the "new thinkers."<sup>133</sup> Even the most blatant ideologists of the Soviet military might, like Karem Rash and Aleksandr Prokhanov, do not go beyond the general lamentations about the decline of Russian naval power and similarly general calls for its reversal.<sup>134</sup> The ideology, which, to use Prokhanov's terminology, "gave birth ... to global activity in different parts of world,"<sup>135</sup> is rapidly disintegrating, and no new intellectual framework for naval operations in the Third World has been found yet.

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<sup>131</sup>Igor Malashenko, "Russia: the Earth's Heartland," *International Affairs*, July 1990, pp. 47, 48.

<sup>132</sup>Andrei Kolosov, "Reappraisal of USSR Third World Policy," *International Affairs*, 1990, no. 5, p. 40.

<sup>133</sup>See, for instance, the speech by Vasiliy Belov at the First Congress of USSR People's Deputies, *Izvestiya*, June 2, 1989: "What is the cost of Afghanistan? What is the cost of Cuba, Nicaragua, Ethiopia?"

<sup>134</sup>See, for instance, Karem Rash, "Okeanicheskoe myshlenie," *Morskoy sbornik*, 1989, no. 7, pp.3-10; Aleksandr Prokhanov, "Na volnakh shtormovoy epokhi," *Morskoy sbornik*, 1990, no. 7, pp. 3-7. About Karem Rash, see Mikhail Tsypkin, "Karem Rash: An Ideologue of Military Power, *Report on the USSR*, vol. 2, no. 31, pp. 8-11.®

<sup>135</sup>Prokhanov, "Na volnakh shtormovoy epokhi," p. 3.

A success or failure of the current American-led international effort against Iraq will undoubtedly have an impact on the Soviet views concerning the use of VMF in Third World conflicts. A victory for the international coalition is likely to strengthen the hand of those arguing in favor of Soviet participation in the UN-sponsored "police" operations in the Third World, and might convince the VMF command to support such operations. A defeat (or a failure to use the huge Western military presence in the Persian Gulf to achieve Iraq's peaceful withdrawal from Kuwait) would have a polarizing impact on the Soviet thinking: on the one hand, it would strengthen the argument that the use of force by superpowers on a large scale is bound to be fruitless; on the other hand, it might strengthen the argument that supporting Third World radicals against the West is not such a bad proposition after all, since the former may come out as the winners.

## CONCLUSIONS.

What will be the cumulative impact on the VMF missions of the "new thinking," rising politics of Russian nationalism and the political clout of the military-industrial complex? The military-industrial complex is still a significant factor in the Soviet political equation. The military, as the top brass like to point out these days, are now the major instrument of keeping the Soviet empire together.<sup>136</sup> The defense industry, according to member of the Presidential Council Aleksandr Yakovlev, has still preserved, despite the economic crisis, its privileged position in the Soviet economy and is strongly resisting reforms.<sup>137</sup> But the military-industrial complex, just like any other sector of the Soviet socio-economic system today, is split. There is a split between the professional military

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<sup>136</sup>See, for instance, an interview with Commander of VDV Gen. Achalov, in V. Zyubin, "O demokratii i poryadke," *Krasnaya zvezda*, August 8, 1990.

<sup>137</sup>RFE/RL, *Daily Report*, no. 86, September 28, 1990.

and the defense industry, with the former blaming the latter for poor quality of weapons.<sup>138</sup> The Navy and the shipbuilding industry have been pointing accusing fingers at each other as a result of the MIKE submarine disaster in April 1989.<sup>139</sup> As indicated above, some highly influential ground forces' officers are beginning to openly view the Navy as a drain on scarce defense resources. While Gorbachev has appeared to show some special interest in the Navy (until his speech to Ground Forces officers near Odessa on August 17, 1990, his only photo opportunities with the military had been with the Navy, in Vladivostok in 1986 and Severomorsk in 1988), the VMF has a minimum utility for maintaining some degree of domestic stability, which is rapidly becoming the main mission of the Soviet Armed Forces. The Ground Forces, on the other hand, are crucial for this mission. This factor is likely to have a negative impact on the Navy's ability to compete for resources in a lean defense budget.

As for the potential impact of Russian nationalism, this highly diverse and contradictory political movement is split into various partially overlapping political groupings, which are only beginning to formulate their attitudes to the naval problems. The "left" democratic wing of Russian nationalism effectively shares its national security agenda with the "new thinkers." The RSFSR Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Boris Yeltsin has Moscow intellectuals as his advisors; these individuals are from the same milieu as most of the "new thinkers," and are likely to share their views when it comes to military policies. The Chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet Committee for International Affairs Vladimir Lukin, for instance, has called for drastic reductions of the Soviet conventional forces due to easing of international tensions, and said that the Soviet Union should exclude defense of Eastern Europe from its military obligations. He has also suggested that

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<sup>138</sup>See, for instance, D. T. Yazov, "Povyshat' otdachu voennoy nauki," *Krasnaya zvezda*, August 14, 1988; Douglas L. Clarke, "Soviet Military Newspaper Blasts Blackjack Bomber Program," *Report on the USSR*, May 25, 1990.

<sup>139</sup>See Aleksandr Yemel'yanenkov, "Argumenty admirala Chernova," *Sobesednik*, July 1990, no. 30; "Zavershila rabotu pravitel'stvennaya komissiya," *Morskoy sbornik*, no. 6, 1990, pp. 17, 18; A. Emel'ianenkov, "Podvodnye techeniya," *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, February 8, 1990.



Russia is to play a role as a bridge between Europe and Asia, a geopolitical concept close to that of some "new thinkers" who see Russia as primarily an Eurasian land power.<sup>140</sup> A prominent candidate for the new job of RSFSR Minister of Defense is Tatyana Koryagina, a radical politician and a woman, both factors certainly profoundly shocking to the senior military officers.<sup>141</sup> The recently appointed first Minister of Foreign Affairs of RSFSR is Andrei Kozyrev, a 39-year old diplomat whose published views closely correspond to the "new thinking."<sup>142</sup> Yeltsin and his aides have not addressed the naval issues, but they are likely to endorse the "new thinkers'" proposals to make the VMF defensive and substantially less expensive.

In his recent appeal to the Russian people widely publicized in the USSR, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a centrist anti-communist Russian nationalist, has advocated Russia's isolationism, including independence for all non-Slavic Union Republics. Hostile to Communist internationalism, he described the ocean-going Soviet Navy as a symbol of the communists' striving for world domination at Russia's expense, and as prime candidate for budget cuts in order to solve Russia's economic problems.<sup>143</sup>

Even the "right-wing" Russian nationalists (the "empire-savers," in Roman Szporluk's apt phrase)<sup>144</sup> whose main goals are preservation of the Soviet empire and of the strong centralized state as a guarantee of Soviet/Russian status of a superpower, and who are strongly committed to the military and highly critical of the "new thinking," are in reality more ambiguous about the VMF than they might seem at a first glance. One of the most coherent and influential spokesmen for this group, Aleksandr Prokhanov, has described the acquisition of naval power as in effect a forced development for Russia:

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<sup>140</sup>"Na sluzhbe Otechestvu," Central TV, August 5, 1990.

<sup>141</sup>RFE/RL, *Daily Report*, no. 195, October 12, 1990

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*; for his views, see A. Kozyrev, "Confidence and the Balance of Interests," *International Affairs*, November 1988.

<sup>143</sup>Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Kak nam obustroit' Rossiyu?* p.14.

<sup>144</sup>Roman Szporluk, "Dilemmas of Russian Nationalism," *Problems of Communism*, July-August 1989, pp. 15-35.



Within the framework of [the policy of turning the USSR into a global revolutionary superpower] a special role was given to the Navy, which has always been for Russia a subject of painful and complicated efforts, because history of Russia is the history of a land power turning into a naval power. The country was striving towards the ocean breaking the shackles of internal problems, which kept us firmly within the gravitational zone of large land spaces. The long and laborious process has been completed in the Soviet period.<sup>145</sup>

If becoming a naval power has been so painful for Russia, one might question how suitable that role is; if that process could be accomplished only in the course of building a deeply dysfunctional social system, does Russia really need to be a naval power?

Behind all the navalist rhetoric of right-wing Russian nationalists, there is the land-power mentality at work. For instance, Karem Rash in a *Morskoy sbornik* article entitled "The Oceanic Mentality," presents Russia's naval manifest destiny as essentially the defense of the sacred periphery of the Soviet/Russian empire. Although he speaks about the Russian "boys" defending "peace" throughout the world's oceans and about turning Russia into a Pacific Ocean power, his plans for this transformation revolve around further development of railroads linking the European Russia to the Far East!<sup>146</sup>

This mentality sees the oceans as a passageway for threats against Russia that must be blocked, rather than as an opening to the world and to new opportunities. When right-wing Russian nationalists and conservative naval officers address the importance of oceans to Russia, they emphasize the naval threat to Russia.<sup>147</sup> The era of maximum expansion of Soviet communism in the 1970's was, in a way, an exception to the Russian naval history because in its course a real attempt was made to treat oceans as a road to opening

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<sup>145</sup> Aleksandr Prokhanov, "Na volnakh shtormovoy epokhi," *Morskoy sbornik*, no. 7, 1990, p. 3.

<sup>146</sup> Karem Rash, "Okeanicheskoe myshlenie," *Morskoy sbornik*, no. 7, 1989, p. 10.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3; Bobrakov, "Ot ne znacheniya k potrebnostyami voyny," p. 4.

geopolitical opportunities. The demise of Soviet communism has destroyed the ideological and economic foundation for this drive.

The main point of disagreement between the "new thinkers" and the Russian nationalists of a more conservative variety concerns Russia's need to be integrated into an international security system, and the latter's ability to provide for Russia's security. The right-wing Russian nationalists tend to see the West (the essential partner for Russia in a new international security system) with suspicion at best; when it comes to Russia's defense needs, they will be unilateralists by choice. A centrist, anti-communist, anti-internationalist like Solzhenitsyn would see the West with skepticism and its experience, including that of international security arrangements, as meager or irrelevant to Russia. But an isolationist Russia truncated out of the Soviet empire and not integrated into a common security system in the Northern Hemisphere will find itself in a rather volatile environment, and thus will have to be at least self-sufficient in its defense needs, a substantial requirement given her size and the length of her borders, including the contiguous seas.

The Navy command is likely to side with the centrist to conservative Russian nationalists. It shares a common interest in the Russian past (the Navy is more actively than ever promoting the glorification of pre-revolutionary Russian naval traditions in order to find a new ideology for its officers instead of the disgraced communist one). The basic anti-internationalism of the Russian nationalists will appeal to the Navy because it continues the tradition of entrusting Russia's security to the Russians and to their armed forces.

What will be the likely impact of the synthesis of all three forces at work (the "new thinking," Russian nationalism, and the VMF's corporate self-interest) on the Navy's missions? The Soviet Navy's mission of nuclear strikes against enemy territory is unlikely to be affected in the immediate future. There is basic agreement among the three on the need for Soviet nuclear deterrent.<sup>148</sup> This guarantees a continuing mission for SSBNs.

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<sup>148</sup>For the views of Russian nationalist liberals, see "Na sluzhbe Otech stvu," Central TV, August 5, 1990.

The reformers simply cannot generate enough political heat to change Soviet SSBNs targeting plans and fleet size. The economic pressure and relative unreliability of technology and personnel, however, can force the VMF to select a conservative bastion-centered mode of SSBNs deployment, which will reduce the utility of older SSBNs with shorter-range SLBMs for this mission.

The strategic ASW is likely to lose the preemptive character (if it ever had it in reality, given the limited Soviet capabilities) attributed to it by some recent VMF pronouncements. Even without a clear political victory of the "new thinkers" opposed to the mission of Repulsion of Aerospace Attack, the economic pressures will curtail the Soviet capabilities for this mission because both the required extensive training and acquisitions are likely to be affected by the budget cuts. However, the VMF will continue to be interested in extending its air defense to the offshore areas.

The mission of interdicting enemy SLOCs has been given additional prominence by C-in-c Adm. Chernavin's personal advocacy. Chernavin's views of SLOC interdiction, however, run against the grain of the "new thinking," as he assumes carrying out attacks on enemy land based facilities broadly associated with shipping, resulting (as Chernavin notes himself) in an escalation. As the possibility of a war in Europe involving the USSR and U.S. diminish (a scenario of the "new thinkers"), this mission would lose both its priority and its potentially escalatory character. A success of current naval blockade of Iraq may furnish the VMF with an opportunity to plan for future SLOC interdiction missions within the UN context -- provided that the Soviet national security policy becomes more inclined in practice towards similar multilateral actions. The impact of Russian nationalists on this mission is difficult to predict.

The mission of destruction of enemy groupings of forces is likely to concentrate more on direct support for land operations at the expense of attempts to establish sea control. Here the aversion of the "new thinkers" to acquiring an expensive offensive capability combined with the centrist Russian nationalists' isolationism and fiscal prudence



are likely to overcome the "right-wing" Russian nationalists' and the Navy command's desire to develop a maximum capability against the Western "threat." Of great significance to this mission is the future of the Soviet Tbilisi-class aircraft carriers: if this program is cancelled, as the "new thinkers" insist, then the VMF would have a hard time planning for naval battles more than a few hundred miles away from the Soviet shores. A survival of the carrier program in the medium term will mean that contrary to this author's expectations, the VMF is developing a new capability for sea control.

The mission of supporting national-liberation and leftist regimes in the Third World seems to be practically eliminated by the decline of communist ideology and the wide unpopularity of aid to such regimes. Nobody seems to argue in favor of continuing such involvement. The outcome of the current Persian Gulf crisis will influence the Soviet policies in this area: a victory of the anti-Iraq coalition might make the idea of Soviet naval participation in UN-sponsored multilateral operations acceptable both to the "new thinkers" and the naval traditionalists; a defeat will aggravate the conflict between the two, with the "new thinkers" using it as an example of the futility of using force, and with the traditionalists arguing in favor of support to radical Third World clients. The centrist and right-wing Russian nationalists are likely to argue against any participation in such multilateral operations, although for different reasons.

Even if severe cuts are carried out, the Soviet Navy will continue to be a major force to reckon with. The Soviet Union's status as a nuclear superpower with a sea-based nuclear arsenal simply does not leave it an option of abandoning its Navy, as practically happened in the 1920's. Ensuring the survivability of its submarine-based nuclear forces requires substantial general purpose naval force. In the absence of intricate naval arms control and confidence-building measures and agreements (if these are feasible at all) even in a favorable political situation, SSBN's cannot be left without some degree of reliable protection. Instability around the perimeter of the Soviet Union or its successor will require a certain level of naval activity in the contiguous seas. Unless a reliable new



international security system arises, Soviet or its successor state security will continue to require a military force, with a downsized but still potent naval component.



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